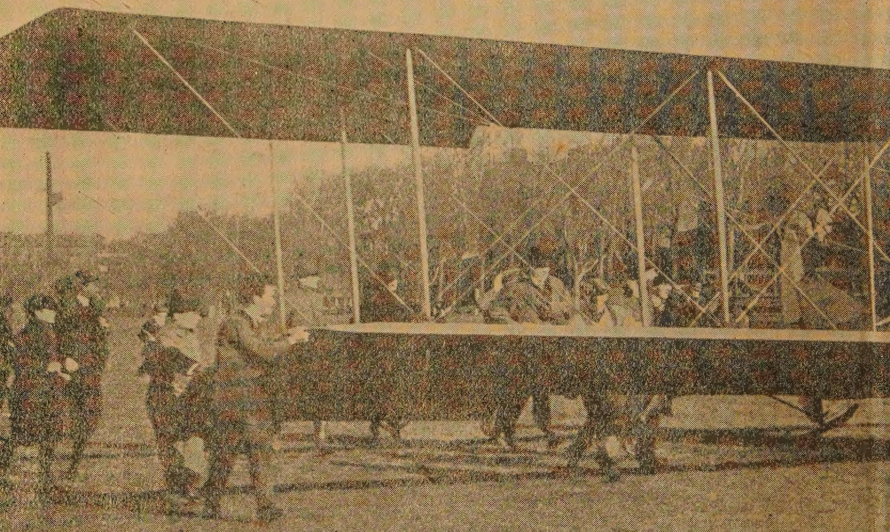
# TOM SLADE
## WITH THE FLYING CORPS

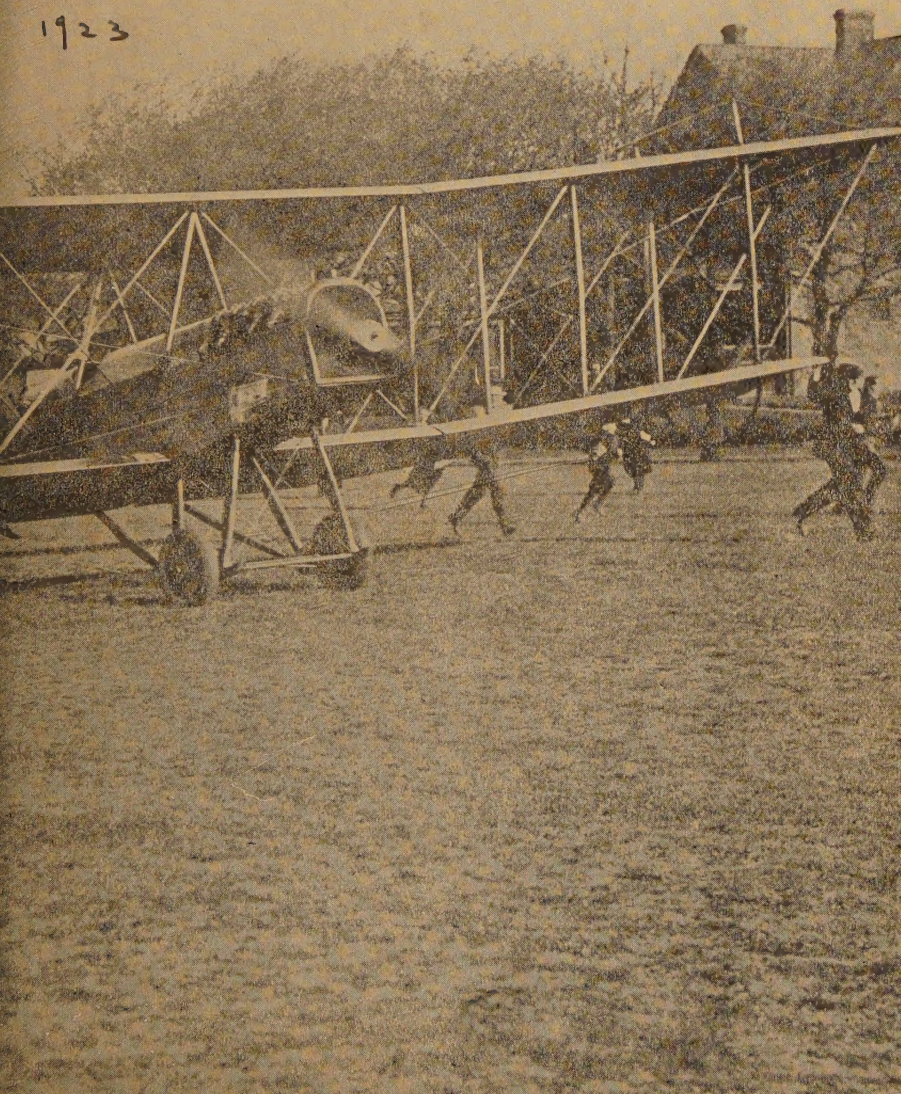
PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

To Peter Kline from Kay, Brian, Mike, Kathy, Heather, Colleen, Patty, Bobby & Billy - Feb. 19, 1967



Birthday Greetings
to Allen Jr
from Aunt Florence and Uncle Jack

1923



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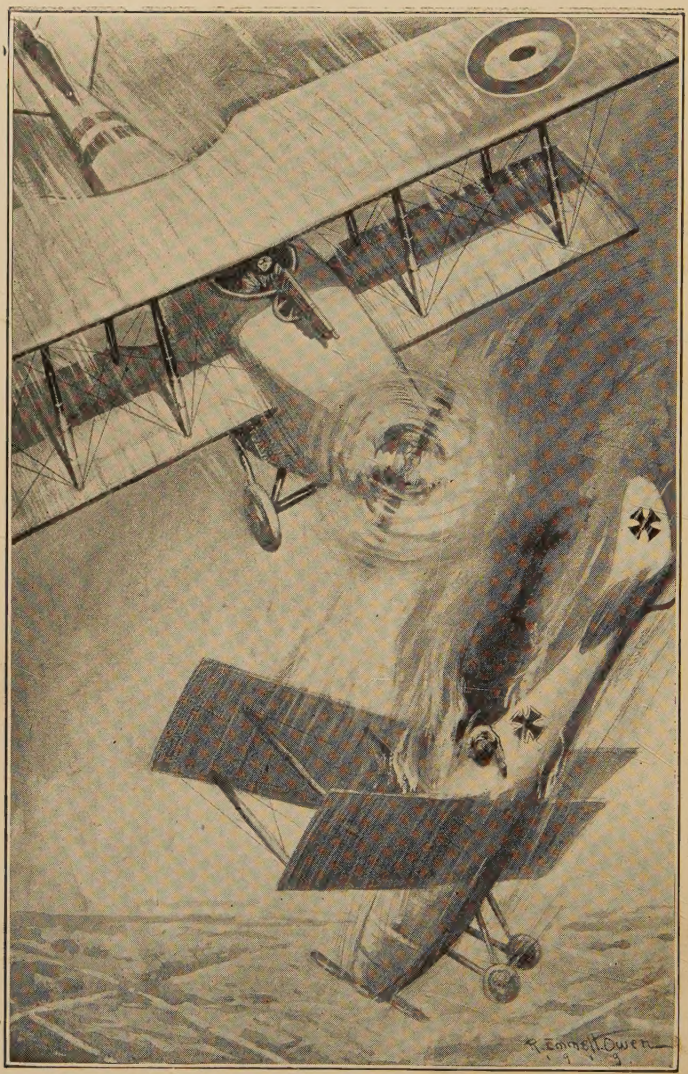

TOM DOWNED THE ENEMY FLYER.
*Frontispiece*—(*Page* 230)

# TOM SLADE WITH THE FLYING CORPS

*A CAMPFIRE TALE*

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

AUTHOR OF

TOM SLADE, BOY SCOUT, TOM SLADE AT TEMPLE CAMP, TOM SLADE ON THE RIVER, TOM SLADE WITH THE COLORS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

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TO THE
T. S. O. T. Z.

# PART ONE

# THE SECRET OF THE SCUPPERS

# TOM SLADE

## WITH THE FLYING CORPS

### CHAPTER I

Tells briefly of the extraordinary episode which ended his service in the Flying Corps, and gives also a glimpse of his adventurous career.

THE reports in the American newspapers of the loss of Tom Slade, aviator, were read by his many admirers and friends with a sense of shock and with feelings of personal bereavement.

Notwithstanding that his former comrades on this side of the water had not seen him for more than two years and knew that the character of his service, as well as his temperament, would be sure to take him where danger was greatest, the accounts of his dramatic end, set forth in cold type, seemed hardly believable.

It is the one familiar name in the casualty lists which brings the war home to one more forcibly than does the loss of a whole division.

But for all that, we received the news pretty calmly and made little fuss until after the great metropolitan dailies had mentioned poor Tom as a national hero. Then we sat up and took notice. When the *Tribune* phoned to our local Scout Council for a photograph of Tom ("any photo would do," they said) our own *Bulletin* published an editorial which would have made poor Tom ashamed to walk down Main Street. And when the *Times* blazoned forth the heading,

JERSEY FLIER DIES A HERO

our *Bulletin* got another photo from Tom's scout patrol and printed it on the front page. Then the Girls' Patriotic League got hold of this picture and had it enlarged, and it was displayed for a week or more in the window of Blanchard's Drug Store.

All we needed was a little nudge from New York and then we paid our tribute proudly and handsomely.

But there was one quarter where pride was lost in a sense of personal sorrow and bereavement, and that was in the local scout troop, of which Tom had been a member and a moving spirit.

I remember very well meeting Roy Blakeley as I stepped off the train that afternoon and, knowing him for the light-hearted youngster that he was, his condition seemed pitiable.

"Have you got a New York paper?" he asked me. "Is it true?"

He had evidently been waiting for the evening papers which came down on the train that I usually take, and as he stood there, trim and spruce in his scout regalia, his hat on the back of his head as usual, and craning his neck for a glimpse of the paper even before I unfolded it, his evident grief went to my heart.

"Yes, it's true, I'm afraid," I said.

"You remember about Quentin Roosevelt," he almost pleaded. "They thought for a while *he* was saved—taken prisoner——"

"Yes, that hope was justified, Roy," I told him, "because all that was known for a few days was that he had been in combat with a Hun plane and had not returned. This is different. You've got to face the fact and not flinch, just the same as Tom faced the enemy—without flinching."

I opened the paper and we stood there together in a little recess of the Bridgeboro Station, and while I read the article aloud Roy's eyes were

riveted upon it, as if he almost doubted the truth of my words. In the Temple Camp office in the big bank building across the street hung a service flag with a single star upon it. It was there that Tom Slade had been employed. I noticed how Roy's eyes wandered over to it every few seconds as if that, since it still hung there, somehow proved the falsity of the published reports.

## JERSEY BOY'S DRAMATIC END

THOMAS SLADE OF THE FLYING CORPS PLUNGED THREE THOUSAND FEET TO DEATH WHILE PURSUING BOCHE PLANE

*HEROIC TRIUMPH PRECEDES HIS TRAGIC END*

WREAKS VENGEANCE IN THE CLOUDS BEFORE HE FALLS. VOW TO KILL HUN WHO BOMBED AMERICAN HOSPITAL KEPT IN THRILLING VICTORY IN THE SKIES

The War Department confirmed to-day the Associated Press report of the loss of Thomas Slade, aviator, in the fighting west of Rheims, while in pursuit of an enemy plane. Slade, who was known among his comrades as "Thatchy," was exceptionally popular and his tragic fate has cast a feeling of gloom throughout the section where he had been lately stationed. His superiors in the Rheims section had no hesitancy in describing his last exploit as unquestionably showing

skill and daring of the first order, and his loss will be keenly felt in the service.

Further details of Slade's end are awaited, but it is feared that little more than the bare facts of this sensational climax of his career will be forthcoming. A strong touch of human interest characterizes his final part in the war by reason of an announcement the youthful flier is said to have made to some of his comrades. When the Germans crossed the Marne in their recent advance a Boche machine dropped bombs upon a Red Cross hospital near Epernay, killing two women nurses. Slade himself was a patient in the hospital at the time, recovering from a slight wound he had received near La Chapelle. He was on the veranda of the little hospital at about dawn, following his restless habit of wandering about within the prescribed limits, and chafing under a convalescence which he believed was needlessly keeping him from service. He saw the Boche plane drop the bombs in the first light of dawn and watched it escape while two French fliers pursued it. One of the nurses, a French girl, had cared for the young American, and his comrades in the hospital are said to have recalled that his sorrow and anger were so great that he expressed the resolve to find and kill this Hun messenger of frightfulness if he lost his own life in doing so.

This resolve was kept in the dramatic combat which ended Slade's career.

By what means he identified the enemy machine is not known, but he is known to have pursued it till both machines disappeared in the clouds over the enemy lines. The character of the tragic conflict which took place in the concealment of that dizzy height can only be conjectured, but the enemy plane was seen to fall, and the strong wind which had blown up in the west brought it into

the little village of La Toi, just within the Allied lines. The machine was a total wreck and though its pilot was quite dead and frightfully mangled from his tremendous fall, it was evident from a wound on his forehead that he had paid the penalty of his cowardly and despicable act before he fell. Less than five minutes after his fall Slade's machine was seen to descend, first coasting, then fluttering as if without control, and when still more than a thousand feet in the air it plunged headlong to the ground. Its occupant was seen falling separately and both are known to have struck upon the rocky hillside where the Germans made such stubborn resistance in the fighting of last Tuesday. It is a matter of deep regret that the body of the gallant young American, crushed and mangled as it must have been, did not fall within the American lines.

"He might have—" Roy began in a kind of daze.

"No, my boy," I told him. "we may as well face the fact. No man in the history of this world ever fell a thousand feet without having his life crushed out. Even if he landed on a haystack instead of a jumble of rocks, it would have killed him. Look here——"

I felt as if I were myself guilty of some form of brutal frightfulness as I pointed to the little supplementary notice upon the substance of which I supposed that the government had based its official confirmation of Tom's death.

An official report to Washington states that a German aviator, flying over the American lines, dropped the cap which Slade had worn into an American camp. It contained the metal identification disk which the young flier had worn on a cord around his neck, and a small badge linked with it which is thought to signify some honor greatly prized in the ranks of the Boy Scouts of America. With these trinkets was a note in German saying that young Slade had been buried in the village of Pevy and that a cross with his name upon it had been placed over his grave.

I think neither of us spoke for fully a minute. I am sure that Roy could not have trusted himself to speak.

"So you see," I finally said, "that even the Huns recognized his gallantry and his heroism."

"They *had* to," said Roy with a kind of pitiful defiance.

We strolled up the hill, neither of us speaking.

"You know what badge it was, don't you?" he asked.

His earnest question and the evident struggle he was having with himself gave me a momentary pang of regret, almost of shame, that I had never taken a very lively interest in the Scouts and especially in this one who had died a hero.

"No, I'm afraid I don't, Roy," I confessed.

"It was the Scouts' Gold Cross," he said. "It

means he risked his life to save a fellow when he was a scout. . . It was a little sick fellow that he saved."

"His wearing it shows how he always remembered the Scouts, doesn't it?" I observed weakly, for I hardly knew what to say.

"None of the people here really knew him," he said, ignoring this remark.

"He was probably of a more retiring nature than you, Roy," I said. But the pleasantry was lost upon him.

We strolled on up the hill in silence and stood for a moment chatting in front of his home, which is one of our show places here in Bridgeboro.

"Mr. Ellsworth found him down in Barrel Alley," Roy said; "he was a hoodlum. After he got to be a scout he went ahead of us all. Even Mr. Temple had to admit it—and you know how kind of grouchy—as you might say—Mr. Temple is sometimes."

I nodded, smiling.

In a general way, I did know the story of how John Temple had become interested in the Scouts through the reclamation by them of this hapless orphan, and before I left for France myself (which was on the following Friday), I learned

more of the young hero's history. I have since had reason to regret that I did not look more carefully at the several pictures of the boy which were displayed in Bridgeboro after the news of his death reached us. They were pictures of a Boy Scout, to be sure, and two years makes such a difference in a boy's appearance that I dare say I would not have recognized the aviator from the stolid-faced, khaki-clad youngster whose photo our local paper reproduced with such vaunting pride.

It was Mr. Ellsworth, that untiring scoutmaster, who told me the story of Tom as far as he knew it. He said that as Tom had been the best all-around hoodlum in town, so he had become the best all-around scout; that it was attributable directly to Tom's wonderful reformation that Mr. Temple had been drawn, neck and shoulders, as he said, into the scouting movement and had founded and endowed Temple Camp in the Catskills, which I believe has come to be regarded as one of the finest scout camps in the country.

He told me how Tom had left the Scouts to work on a transport; how his ship had been torpedoed and he had been taken aboard a German submarine and incarcerated in a German prison

camp. From that point information about him was scanty and contradictory. He had escaped (so Mr. Ellsworth had heard) from the prison camp and somehow had made his way to France where he was next heard from as a motorcycle dispatch rider.

How and when he had got into the Flying Corps Mr. Ellsworth did not know, for he had been heard of as an aviator only a month or two prior to the shocking news of his heroic end.

For a week or two after the news came, the name of this heroic young scout was on every lip, but I must confess that when I went away the thought which lingered with me most persistently was not so much that of the young fellow whose career had been so varied and remarkable but of that comrade of his scouting days who took the young aviator's loss home to himself with such a sense of personal bereavement. Stout-hearted champion as he was of his friend's prowess, I verily believe that the heart which beat under that trim scout regalia was still buoyed up with a forlorn hope that some belated report might yet prove the government's authenticated announcement to be false. There was a kind of heroism in this challenge to careful and methodi-

cal old Uncle Sam which I am afraid appealed to me more even than did Tom's exploits and noble sacrifice, and I felt that if I could only do the impossible and assure Roy that his friend still lived and would come home, it would afford me a keener joy than I had ever known.

I cannot for the life of me say what the reason was for Roy's making a particular confidante and companion of me during the few days that I remained in Bridgeboro. Perhaps his memory of our stroll up the hill together the day the sad news reached town, and the fellowship of sympathy which then sprang up between us, made him regard me as in some special way his friend.

However it was, on the morning that I left home for the long journey which was to mean so much to us both, I found Roy swinging his legs from the railing of my porch waiting, so he explained, to help carry my luggage down to the station. In the stressful days to follow I always remembered him as he looked then—a roguish smile upon his face which had been so clouded with his brave grief, his scout hat on the back of his curly head and the scarf he always wore hanging loosely around his neck. I was quite taken aback by this undeserved attention.

"You said you didn't know much about the Scouts," he reminded me. "One thing about them is that a scout has to do a good turn every day, and I just happened to think this would be a good one."

"I hope I may be able to return it some day," I said, quite overwhelmed.

"Then I'd only have to do another one," he answered briskly. "You'd only make matters worse."

"I see," I laughed, letting him take one of my grips.

So we went down the hill together and I was glad to see that his accustomed buoyancy was gaining the upper hand at last. We did not speak of Tom until the train had actually come to a stop and he handed me my grip.

"As long as you're going over there," he said, rather hesitatingly, "maybe you'll hear more about Tom—how he died, I mean."

"France is a big place, Roy," I warned him, "but if I can get any details be sure I'll remember them to tell you; I'll remember that I owe you a good turn," I added.

Thus we parted. And I am afraid, as I said before, that I thought more about Roy on the

way over than I did about his dead hero pal. As the great ship made her perilous way in silence and darkness through the danger zone, I thought of the trim figure which had waited for the evening papers at the station on that sorrowful day, of the service flag with its single star hanging in the window across the street, and of this same trim figure, with its brown face and clear eyes and curly hair, swinging its legs from the railing of my porch, waiting to do me a good turn.

I am afraid that I did not think so much about that lonely, rough-made grave in the little village of Pevy in devastated, bleeding France.

## CHAPTER II

Tells how I chanced to learn something of Slade's career and of the circumstance which was destined to send me out of France.

My own adventures as a correspondent on the west front would seem tame enough in comparison with the exploits which I purpose to relate, and I will not weary you with a rehearsal of my experiences and observations, especially since the account of these has appeared from day to day in two of our American newspapers.

I am afraid that amid the roar of battle and with the continual sight of death and bloodshed all about me I gave little thought to the young fellow from my home town in far-off America who had given his life for the great cause. What had seemed glorious and heroic in Bridgeboro was divested of much of its dramatic and noble quality by the sights which I beheld each day. I was present when Arliss, that daring young ace, fell to his death, and I knew, or at least I thought

at the time, that no career could have been more adventurous than his and no death so splendid.

I did not, however, forget to make inquiries in responsible quarters about the death of Tom Slade and being for a time in the neighborhood of his final exploit, I was able to gather a few details which amplified and unquestionably confirmed the accounts of his career and death as published in America.

It was not until long afterward that I learned from a very responsible source how Slade had got into the Flying Corps, a matter which interested me greatly, since the last his friends in America had heard of him before the news of his death came, he had been in the Motorcycle Service. This and much other astonishing information I received during my journey in the Alps of which you shall hear the true account. I say *true account* because it has been published in connection with that frightful journey that I assisted a deserter, a report which has not one word of truth in it.

I purpose, as well as I may, to recount this whole extraordinary business exactly as it unfolded itself to me, rather than to attempt a consecutively ordered narrative; and whatever it may

lose in the way of skilfull story-writing, it will at least have the solid advantage of being the plain truth, plainly told. I am quite certain that no one except myself is in a position to tell of this journey and I am equally certain that I would rather die tomorrow than go through again the unspeakable horrors which I experienced.

So much for myself, and I will pick out of all this jumble of amazing happenings with their tragic climax, the episode of my stay in the hospital near Epernay as being a convenient and appropriate starting-point for my tale.

This hospital, as it turned out, was the one where Tom had spent upwards of a month recovering (according to the American newspapers) from a "slight wound." The "slight wound," as I learned, had all but killed him. A cruel wound in the head it was, received in an exploit which was only less extraordinary than the one which shortly afterward put an end to his career.

I mean to tell you of this incident as I learned it from the surgeons and nurses, and also of one or two still earlier adventures of the young flyer which I heard of while I was under treatment.

But first I must tell you of an experience of my own which put me in the way of learning these

things and laid the foundation, as I might say, for my learning other things.

I was gassed. I have read various accounts of how people act and feel when they are gassed and I have seen an actor in the movies demonstrate these agonies by many graceful contortions, but the only thing that I can remember about the actual occurrence was that my head felt just as one's foot feels when it is "asleep." I remember trying to shake my head, just as one shakes his foot.

I suppose I was not gassed very badly or I would not be here now. In the days of my suffering I was told that I had only myself to blame which, of course, was a great consolation to me. I do not know what became of my mask, but I still have my fountain pen and I should like to show it to you. The silver filigree work which covers it is changed to a rich green color, making the whole thing very beautiful and altogether unique. Fritzie did this with his abominable gas. I do not know what kind of gas it was, but I treasure my pen as being a sample of clever artcraft work, made by the Germans—though not made in Germany.

## CHAPTER III

Tells how I looked at the Scuppers through a field glass, and of how I resolved on a very hazardous enterprise.

I must tell you in some detail of this experience of my own since, as I said, the whole story hangs upon it.

You will understand that at the time of Tom's tragic exploit the big bulge in the straining line which the Germans had made in their drive toward the Marne, and which was known as the Marne salient, had been entirely wiped out by the allied forces. The line ran almost straight between Soissons and Rheims with the little village of Pevy, where the Germans had erected the cross, lying a short distance within the enemy lines. So the line remained for some time while Marshal Foch was pressing forward elsewhere.

My first experience of actual warfare was when I joined the boys near Jonchery, prepared to accompany them northward toward the Aisne River.

There was not much fighting in that advance. The Germans picked up like a lot of squatters and retreated so fast that twice we lost touch with them altogether, but we had the heroic satisfaction of capturing no end of deserted baggage. I think I never saw so many musical instruments and parrots as they left behind, and, indeed, the love of pets and music which those wretches showed has always been a matter of marvel to me. One of these squawking birds, I remember, was flapping its wings, all bewildered, upon the top of a post, to which (I was told) several British Tommies had been tied and tortured, and shrieking, "Cut their throats, cut their throats!" at the top of its expressionless voice. They are strange people who are so gentle and patient that they can teach these birds as no others can and then can play a tune on the mandolin and then torture a man to death.

After several days of this inglorious marathon race, the Germans made a stand upon the summit of a hill. I understood that our immediate objective was Pevy, which I remembered as the village where Tom's grave was, and it gave me a great deal of satisfaction to know that this place

must presently fall to our troops and that the grave would be at least on friendly soil.

But Pevy was not to be so easily taken. The hill which confronted us descended in an almost sheer precipice upon the near side and I think I never saw such a rocky chaos as it presented.

My friend, Lieutenant Wells, let me view it through his field glass, and a more depressing, bleak and desolate place I never beheld—a jungle of gray boulders it was, and naked earth, as if the hill had been split open like an apple and one-half taken away.

"That's where Fritzie mowed us down a while ago, when he was headed for the Marne," said the lieutenant.

"You mean from the summit?" I asked.

"Yes, our boys tried to scale that stone-yard and stop the advance. We outnumbered them three to one just there, but they held out. Some of us got on top, but it was no use."

I don't know what put it into my head unless it was the knowledge that this place was near upon Pevy and west of Rheims, but it occurred to me that perhaps this was the very "rocky hillside" which the American newspaper had mentioned as

the place where Tom fell. I remembered the phrase "in the fighting west of Rheims," and also "the rocky hillside where the Germans put up such a stubborn resistance."

"Do you suppose that is where Slade, the aviator, fell?" I asked.

"Thatchy?" he queried. "Yes, it is. Just a little to the left," he added, moving the glass for me. "Do you see two big rocks with points? One a little higher than the others?"

Our detachment had gone on along the road which flanked the hill, for, of course, there was no intention of surmounting the forbidding place, and it was important that we pass out of range of it before the enemy gain the vantage point of the summit.

For half a minute I looked upon the very spot where Slade had fallen—two big, gray rocks somewhat more than midway up that cheerless cliff and I thought of that traveller described in a poem of Scott's, who died in some remote, forlorn spot—unfriended and alone. The two rocks formed a sort of gutter on the precipitous hill, and a quantity of descending debris had fallen against them, forming a chaotic mass there.

"I suppose he rolled down against those and caught there," I said, still looking at the place through the glass.

"Guess so," said the lieutenant, half interested. "They call them the Scuppers. I heard a couple of Signal Corps men saying that the Huns must have found Slade in the Scuppers—God-forsaken looking place, huh?"

I could not speak just then. Of all the lonesome places to die, that gray, cold, forsaken waste seemed the most terrible—a spot more barren and heartless than the sea, and ugly with a kind of brutal ugliness. And that, I reflected, was where Tom Slade of my own home town in far-off America fell to his heroic death. I wondered how long he had lain there and suffered beyond the help of surgeons and nurses.

"He's buried in Pevy," I said; "they had the decency to take him there and give him a Christian grave."

The lieutenant had already taken his glass from me and was moving away. He was not greatly interested in Tom Slade.

"Do you think," I said, "that if I climbed up there and looked at the place, I could manage to get the rest of the way to the summit and join

the detachment before they reach Pevy? I want to be in at the finish."

"You might do it in a newspaper or in the movies," he said, for he would never let me forget that I was a fountain-pen warrior.

"Please remember," said I (for I was getting a little weary of such talk), "that the correspondents have done great work in this war. As for the movies, I'll show you that I am as good as Douglas Fairbanks himself, for I am going to climb——"

"Scale that dizzy height, you mean," he taunted; "that'll sound good in a special article."

"Indeed!" said I. "Well, then, I am going to 'scale that dizzy height' and see where Tom Slade fell, for he came from the little town in Jersey where I belong."

"You'll be killed by the Germans," said he.

"You forget I have my trusty fountain pen with me," I replied, scathingly.

He tried to dissuade me, saying that when I reached the summit I was just as likely to fall in with the enemy as with our own men and that unless I expected to defeat them single-handed I had better follow the route prescribed by the officers. But I was a free agent in such matters;

no charge of desertion or disobedience could be laid against me, and I was resolved that come what might I would take some memento from that lonely spot back to my young friend in America.

Little I thought at the time what that memento would be.

## CHAPTER IV

Tells of how I visited the Scuppers, and of the first of two discoveries which I made there.

YOU are to understand that the road which we had followed from Jonchery appeared from a distance to run straight into this precipitous jungle of rock and broken earth, but a short way from the base it verged to the westward, running through a dense wood and, as our officers were well aware, led up the easy west slope of the hill.

It was thought unlikely that the slight advantage which their precedence up this hill might give them would tempt the Germans to pause and give battle there, for they were running as suburbanites run to catch their trains. But if they should emerge upon the top of this towering cliff before our boys had verged out of range of it into the woods there might be an unhappy story to tell. I did not realize it while I was tramping along rather faster than is my wont, but I knew afterward that this peril had been averted by a pretty

narrow calculation on the part of our officers and some pretty good sprinting of the men.

As it turned out, our detachment was well out of range of the height and pushing rapidly westward through the protecting woods when I found myself standing alone in the shadow of the rock-ribbed ascent. A better target one could scarcely imagine, and I reflected on the danger in which I was placing myself for no better reason than a sentimental, perhaps a sort of morbid, desire to see the spot where Tom Slade had fallen.

One advantage I had, and that was the declining sun which flickered the rocks with glints of changing light, and I consoled myself with the thought that it would soon be dusk.

Between myself and the cliff lay an expanse of marshland a quarter of a mile or so in width, I should say, and into this I plunged, wallowing through the mushy undergrowth and stumbling the more because I must keep my eyes fixed upon the summit of the hill.

No sign of life was there upon that frowning cliff, only the little crimson glints, coming and going as the light failed.

Once and again I fancied these to be soldiers, and a particularly steady glare in what seemed to

be a clump of foliage troubled me with misgivings lest the light might be reflected from the steel of a machine-gun.

I had thought of carrying a large bunch of swamp growth by way of camouflaging myself, but it was quite difficult enough to move through the swamp without that handicap. Once I got a footing upon something hard and the pressure of my weight sent the other end of it bobbing up out of the mushy scum, and I was startled to see a skeleton leg with a few shreds upon it sticking up and hanging over at the knee in a gruesome manner. A German helmet lay near the skull, which I had trodden upon. As I plodded on the ghastly thing settled itself again into the marsh as if it had been prematurely awakened out of a peaceful slumber.

I was pretty thoroughly drenched when I reached the foot of the hill and it occurred to me that by rolling in the dry earth there I might acquire an appearance conforming to the hue and character of my surroundings. That done, I began my climb.

The ascent was not quite as precipitous as it had looked from a distance, but it was all up and down, the loose earth sliding so in places that I

kept slipping back and seemed to make no more progress than a horse on a treadmill. Moreover, there was great danger from descending stones in these places, for the whole land above seemed in process of erosion and one big rock, in the shelter of which I paused to rest, went tumbling away below me leaving me sprawling.

At last, after fifteen or twenty minutes of this strenuous, lose-and-gain progress, I reached the little area of vegetation where the Scuppers, so-called, were located. Here I had a splendid birds-eye view of the road over which we had come and the swamp and the adjacent woods around the west slope of the hill. The ascent, I saw, must be very gradual there, and I realized what I had not realized before, that if our boys were so fortunate as to catch the enemy between themselves and this cliff there would be something else besides stones rolling down. Perhaps that was part of the plan of our officers. They never confided anything to me.

What I was immediately concerned with was the Scuppers themselves. The little oasis of a few square yards in which I stood consisted of a jumble of rock with sparse vegetation poking out between, and a miscellaneous collection of nature's

odds and ends which had struck up a sort of fraternity here like outcasts in some unmolested haunt. Trees which had broken away from above grew at crazy angles, their roots having taken precarious hold upon the soil, and the whole conglomerate mass was held by the two great jagged rocks known as the Scuppers. These rocks, as I could see now, must have been very deeply imbedded and the comparatively small portion of them which protruded from the earth formed a continuous ledge or gutter for some yards, against which all of this distorted natural furniture rested. Perhaps some sailor had first called them the Scuppers, and although on close view they bore no resemblance to the scuppers of a ship, the name was not inappropriate.

In my picnicking and summer rambles I have visited many places with darkly suggestive names —Hell's Kitchens, Devil's Punch-bowls, and the like—cosy nooks, as a rule, with nothing more appalling about them than seductive shade and quiet, but here indeed was a spot after Satan's own heart. In one place a great half-exposed root formed a sort of cave, its drooping tentacles hanging like a bead curtain at the entrance. And the almost horizontal posture of the tree-trunks

and the deformed branches of foliage made dim recesses and deathlike nooks. Yet the place was picturesque, too, affording a certain feeling of cosiness and dubious security, perched as it was midway of that torn, naked ascent.

I had scarcely begun my exploration of this curious island, as it might be called, when something crunched beneath my foot. It proved to be a glass disk which I recognized as one of the sort forming the goggles worn by aviators. Part of the metal frame and some heavy material like khaki were attached to it, so I concluded that the goggles had formed a part of the cap (as the newspapers had called it) or, more properly, the mask, used by the fallen airman.

This small find confirmed my own surmise and the lieutenant's statement that this lonesome, uncanny place was indeed the scene of Slade's tragic death, and, as I stood there with the fragment in my hand, I thanked Heaven that our boys were even now on their way to take the village of Pevy where the poor remains of the dead American lay. I wondered why the Germans—barbarians that they were—had gone to the trouble and encountered the perils of recovering his maimed body. There is no question that Germans have little spasms of humanity, just as the Anglo Sax-

ons may have spasms of cruelty. And that, I thought, must be the explanation. They did it without thinking!

But what a thing to do. It must have involved risk and no little ingenuity to get Slade's body up that frightful precipice. It puzzled me to know why they had done it and pretty soon, when I discovered an explanation, it staggered and amazed me. They had done it because—— Oh, I would not let myself think of it—it was incredible. . .

And I thought of Roy Blakeley, Tom's friend, who had believed in him, trusted him, worshipped him. How could I go back and tell Roy what I had found?

But I am running a little ahead of my narrative. It is hard to set this matter down in orderly fashion. Even now I feel the cold chill of speechless horror which came over me, in that little dank cave formed by the tree root as I sat there almost stupefied ten or fifteen minutes after my second discovery, of which I must now tell you.

Even now, whenever I smell fresh earth, it takes me back to that dim, ghastly spot and renews the feeling of unutterable dismay and sickening disgust which I felt then.

# CHAPTER V

Tells of my second discovery and brings me to the point of startling revelations.

THIS thing which I had inadvertently stepped on had, I suppose, been a part of the cap, so-called, which the Germans had dropped behind the allied lines along with Slade's identification disk and the "small badge linked with it which was supposed to signify some honor greatly prized in the ranks of the Boy Scouts of America." It did not occur to me as strange that the newspaper had called it a cap when in point of fact it was one of those goggle masks sometimes worn by airmen.

The discovery of this broken trifle spurred me to further scrutiny of the place and I groped about in the gathering dusk but without result. There was no sign to show where the aviator had fallen and had it not been for the merest chance I should never have made the discovery which, alas, bore a darker significance than did the innocent little piece of glass which I had crushed under foot.

I was just about to continue my climb up the hill when I noticed one of those great birds which are a common and ghoulish sight in the theatre of war, circling overhead. These sinister creatures will follow a retreating army for miles, intent and undiscouraged, and apparently knowing if it is the purpose of that army to make a stand and fight. I have seen them veer away and disappear when some advantageous ground for fighting has been reached and passed. Near Blanzy, where no one dreamed that the retreating foe would give battle, a big flock of them hovered all day waiting for the routed Germans to reach that place and rally on the high ground. And they did not wait in vain. No military plans or probabilities escape them.

Well, I was watching this ungainly harbinger of death as it flopped about, its thin, naked, ugly neck extended in its horrid quest, and wondering if its presence boded ill for our boys or for the foe, when my gaze was drawn to a spot among the upper branches of the tree over which the bird was circling.

This tree, the only one to hold its head up in that desert of deformities, had probably acted as a check and prop for falling material. A mass

of tangled brush had sprung up about it and many rocks found a precarious lodgment among its half-exposed roots.

What I noticed in this tree appeared in the dusk to be an area of brown fungus upon the trunk some twenty feet or more from the ground. I probably would not have thought twice about it had I not noticed a loose end of it moving slightly with the breeze, which gave the whole thing an appearance of not belonging there.

Still, I dare say I should have gone my way without further investigation except that this loose end, fluttering like a beckoning signal in that dismal spot, haunted me. I started away and turned back again. The great bird had gone and not a thing was there moving overhead—nothing save this little loose, stirring object, whatever it was, its outline growing dim in the dusk.

Doubtless the mere fact that it moved would have attracted me as I stood in the deathlike gloom of that chaotic jungle, but even as I watched my imagination conjured it into a kind of beckoning finger and I experienced a strange chill, as of apprehension, as it fluttered up there among the branches.

An impulse came upon me to climb the tree and

dispel my vague fancies by a closer look at this object.

It was not without difficulty that I managed to "shinny" up the trunk, but the lower branches once reached, I was able to pass easily from one to another until I was on a level with the brown object.

I had but to touch it to find that it was no fungus growth at all, but the remnant of a khaki jacket wound so tightly about the trunk that even on this closer inspection it seemed a very part of the tree. It must have been wetted and dried again by much rain and sun, for it was stiff and hard and clung to the bark when I tried to remove it. The part which blew loose was one of the sleeves and as I pulled this in my effort to detach the whole, the brittle, rotted fabric tore and came away like bark. It must have been there for a long time.

At one place, as I passed my hand over it, I encountered a hubble, very hard, and upon working the jacket loose I found this to be a watch in the flap pocket.

You are to suppose that this singular find greatly excited and interested me and it was in a trem-

bling suspense that I carefully detached and dropped the thing to the ground.

How came it there? How long had it been there? I think no relic of a human presence in that cheerless, melancholy spot could have affected me more and started such a train of thoughts as did this rag which a living person had once worn. As to who had worn it, there seemed but one answer—it was the jacket of Tom Slade.

And this supposition I was presently to confirm.

But even before I had reached the ground there appeared to my mind's eye a picture of the last scene in the venturesome life of the young airman, here in this cheerless jungle, and I shuddered as I thought of it, and of the heroic triumph which preceded his hideous end. I made no doubt that in his frightful fall the jacket had caught upon some sharp branch of the tree and held him, who shall say for how long, suffering—more likely dead. And when the inert, mangled form had become extricated and gone down, this tattered remnant had remained blowing in the wind and rain, marking the spot where he had fallen, until the beating storms had plastered it against the trunk, save for the little moving shred which I

had seen. And so the khaki jacket, like everything else which came into that crazy, derelict community, had become a part of it, seeming, as I have said, like a bit of brown fungus on that lonely tree. . .

## CHAPTER VI

Tells of the appalling secret which was revealed to me in the Scuppers and of my decision with regard to it.

I NOW approach a point in my story where it is difficult for me to write calmly, yet I wish to unfold this wretched business to you exactly as it unfolded itself to me. What I learned that night was all I ever knew until I knew all, and much was to happen before that time. It is not easy, sitting here now and with the whole amazing story in mind, to reproduce my mental state so that you may see and feel exactly as I saw and felt then.

Reaching the ground, I took the bundle of stiffened shreds and crawled into the little cave formed by the tree roots, for it was now nearly dark and I was cautious enough not to turn my flashlight on in the open.

I think I never experienced such a feeling of suspense as when I hurriedly rummaged the rotted pockets of this bleached rag which had once been

part of the uniform of the boy from my own home town, in far-off America, Roy Blakeley's friend, the young hero who had begun as a Boy Scout and gone to his death in a glorious dramatic triumph. And I was thrilled as I repeated his name to myself— *Tom Slade.*

In the sickening, earth-smelling dampness of that little grotto I ransacked the pockets of the tattered garment, my searchlight laid upon a piece of rotted wood so that its glare was cast upon my work. The watch I found to be at one end of a coarse, brass, lock-link chain, at the other end of which was fastened an oilskin wallet with an ingenious system of folds and interfolds intended to exclude water and dampness. The chain was long enough so that the watch could rest in the breast and the wallet in the hip pocket. There was no hip pocket here, of course, and the wallet I found in the rotted folds of the garment. I think it must have been plastered fast between the jacket and the tree-trunk. Probably it had been jerked out of the trousers pocket when the victim fell from the tree.

Three things about the watch interested but did not surprise me. It had stopped at twenty minutes after five, presumably the time of Slade's

fall; it was of American manufacture, and the initials T. S. were engraved upon the back of it. Here was confirmation, if I needed any, of the identity of its owner. It was very much the worse for rain and weather, but these facts were plainly discernible.

The oilskin wallet was of German manufacture, exactly like one which the boys had taken from a dead Boche and which I had seen and examined. That wallet of poor dead Fritzie's had contained a childishly sentimental letter from Frankfort. This one, as you shall hear, contained documents of quite a different character.

The first thing I brought forth was the photograph of a girl—a very pretty girl indeed, if I am any judge. As I looked at it I had a vague recollection of having seen the girl somewhere—at a patriotic gathering in Bridgeboro, I thought, or perhaps it was just on Main Street, or in the library or the post-office. Anyway, she was no French girl and I could have vowed that I had seen her in Bridgeboro. So here, at least, was a pretty touch in the harrowing catastrophe. Tom had had a girl—as every soldier should have.

You will not be impatient if I run over the contents of this wallet with some particularity. The

next thing was half of a half sheet of note paper, torn from a letter presumably, and with an irrelevant memorandum written on the other side The letter was from our young lady, I felt sure, and I thought it rather an ungallant treatment of her missive. The few sentences on this fragment ran thus. I copy them from the scrap itself.

*looked about it seemed as if everyone in Bridgeboro was there. And of course the Boy Scouts and that excruciating imp of a Blakeley boy were on hand—Ruth's brother, you know. Oh, by the way, who do you suppose is in the old place on Terrace Avenue? Guess. The Red Cross ladies and I'm working with*

That was all, but it took me back home to Bridgeboro with a rush! And here, thought I, with half the world between us, here in this ghostly, forlorn scene of tragedy, am I reading of that "excruciating imp"—Roy Blakeley! Of course the Red Cross ladies were plying their needles in a vacant store on Terrace Avenue—I knew that well enough. But what was the grand

affair at which the whole of Bridgeboro seemed to be present?

Poor Roy, poor Tom, poor girl, all to be stricken in one way or another because some bloody tyrant thought he owned the earth.

But I found companionship and solace in those few broken sentences and it was with wistful thoughts of home that I turned the scrap over and read in another hand:

*See Capt. Pfeiffer about list and supplies from Berry-au-Bac.*

Captain Pfeiffer! Here was a good old German name for a loyal American captain—Pfeiffer! The least he could have done would have been to change it to Fifer. Well, he could kill the Germans with any name, but——

I scrutinized the memorandum a little more intently. *List and supplies from Berry-au-Bac.* Hmph! Why, Berry-au-Bac was fifteen or twenty miles within the German lines. At the time of Tom's last service it must have been double that. What had Tom Slade to do with lists and supplies from Berry-au-Bac?

Why, of course, he had descended upon Berry-

au-Bac and captured lists and— No, it was absurd.

Puzzled, I turned the scrap of paper over and found some reassurance in those cordial, friendly words written in the girl's hand. No, sir, we do not turn out spies or traitors in Bridgeboro. How should *I* know what that memorandum meant? But if my name were Pfeiffer, I'd change it to Fifer or Fife, I knew that much. Tom Slade knew his business, I was sure of that.

So thinking, I unfolded the next paper and found that he knew his business only too well. Here was a rough map showing every last hospital and dressing station beyond the American lines in that sector.

Two were crossed off—blown up, I suppose. There were some twenty or more still to be blown up. Underneath were written these words, as nearly as I can remember them:

*Report dressing station foot of Fav Hill joined to one on top—empty—don't bother. Ask about supplies from Wangardt. Correct list sent to Cap. Dennheimer so I don't get blame. Tell him G station on other list is full.*

And so on, and so on—I could not read any more. The name of that unspeakable wretch, Dennheimer, was quite enough. His deeds of bestial inhumanity were such as to call down the vengeance of Heaven and damn him for all eternity. I knew that he had his minions peering out under their big gas bags and skulking about like the unclean bird I had been watching, putting the doom of certain death on those already wounded. I knew that, like that sinister, cowardly bird, he made it his special function to defile the blue sky, sending his sneaking minions of the air forth upon their barbarous errands. They did not fight, the gallant fliers of this command, they skulked and murdered and fled.

And here in my hands, incredible as it seemed, was the last damning memorial of one of them.

And an American!

With an uncertain hand and a kind of limp disgust, I drew the papers forth and scanned them one after another. I felt sick, sick with a kind of nausea of bewilderment and utter despair. For if this were true (and how could it be otherwise?), then I had no more faith in human nature.

Yes, I had—I had faith in the faith which I knew lived back in Bridgeboro, and I think I

drew a little hope, perhaps still a little confidence, from the stout heart which would not even believe that this—this aviator—was dead. Excruciating imp! Hero, I called him, and I resolved that he should never hear this from me. He believed that the worst had not happened, loyal, stout-hearted friend and champion and comrade that he was. But death is not the worst.

I need not trouble you with the sordid contents of those other papers; nor have I them at hand to copy. They were the familiar baggage of a traitor and a spy, with all the nice details of sneaking ingenuity and signs of moral turpitude, such as to arouse the wrath of a saint. It will be enough to tell you that if this creature had lived, the hospital at Dormans would probably have seen its agonized victims writhing in flames. And one of our little cemeteries, with its rows of wooden crosses, was to have been torn with jagged holes—I do not know why. There was a detailed report for Dennheimer which would have pleased him had he received it. And Captain Pfeiffer would not have been disappointed.

I sat there, holding the watch in one hand, the wallet in the other, jerking the coarse chain as if I would break it asunder, and separate the

American timepiece bearing the initials of an American boy from this other souvenir of cowardice and treachery. Then I looked again at the picture of the girl with the clear, honest eyes, and then at her friendly words about Bridgeboro. And he had torn a piece from that letter to make a treacherous memorandum. The wretch!

So I sat in the darkness and pondered, noticing a spider which hurried back and forth in the small glare of my light, and other irrelevant trifles, as one will do under the stress of shock and sorrow. My head throbbed and I felt a strange disinclination to move.

Could this thing be? Why, he had vowed to be revenged upon those wretches! Had the whole business, first and last, been a treacherous ruse? Had he gained admission to the hospital simply to spy there? Was the newspaper account all wrong and he, the sneak and traitor, been but the hero of some misinformed newspaper correspondent? Everything is green when you look through green spectacles and the only thing I could be certain of now was the unmistakable meaning of these papers and the identity of their possessor. Everything else seemed readily susceptible of a dark and sinister construction.

As I groped in my mind for some saving fact or discrepancy which might explain, or at least raise a doubt, the thought of one final clinching circumstance forced itself upon me and I gave up in hopeless despair. I knew now why the Germans had come here and taken away Slade's body. It was not his body they were after, but his papers and for these they had searched in vain. The decent burial of his poor remains in some less cheerless spot than here, and the dropping of his American identification disk and scout badge (which apparently he had continued to wear) were perhaps the kindly act of Fritz in one of his erratic, sentimental moods—a fraternal and charitable afterthought.

And this was the secret of the Scuppers—dark and sordid and depressing, like all else there; and so, I was resolved, it should remain—an invisible part of that gloomy derelict community, like the very atmosphere of that grim, cheerless spot to which fate or a merciful Providence had relegated it.

# PART TWO

## REMINISCENCES OF SLADE'S CAREER

# FOREWORD

It is a fact that the career of Slade from the time he became an airman and even before was one of bravery and patriotism, and his disaffection, apparently, had come only at the very end of his service. Even then, as it seemed, he had not gone over to the enemy, but had accepted and carried out commissions from them while maintaining an appearance of loyalty. And I marvelled at the prowess and resource which he must have shown in this hazardous business. No one in all that sector, where he had come and gone as freely as the birds of the air, had suspected him; none spoke of him except in praise.

Perhaps the newspaper account which had thrilled us so at home was somewhat in the nature of a "write-up," and there were, indeed, several versions current as to just how Slade had met his death. Most of these fell a little short in the ingredient of reckless valor, but there was no question that he had been counted a very daring

airman, and I could multiply instances of praise and expressions of trust and confidence from his comrades and superiors.

I supposed at the time that money had tempted this brave young fellow to his moral fall. About all I had ever known of him was that he had been of a simple mind and very poor. This much I had learned from Roy.

Before I left the Scuppers that night I had a mental tussle over the question of what I should do with these incriminating papers. If Slade had been living I should have turned them over to the authorities, but as it was I could not see that anything was to be gained by their preservation. They pertained to conditions which no longer existed, they revealed no facts that were of value now, and I decided to destroy them then and there —all except the picture of the girl and the scrap of her letter containing the familiar references to Bridgeboro, for I could not bring myself to cast those into the flames. Her friendly, companionable words, though they were not addressed to me, comforted me, nevertheless, and conjured up thoughts of home. The brief memorandum on the back I obliterated with my pen. With the other papers I made a little fire in my cave, be-

lieving that I could the better fulfill my promise to Roy if I put, or tried to put, this horrible sequel of a brave career out of my mind altogether.

I shall ask you to do the same while I try to give you a sketch of Slade's remarkable deeds up to the time he became a patient "recovering from a slight wound," in the Epernay Hospital. This tale of his career is necessarily disjointed and fragmentary, and was intended only for the perusal of Roy. I began it in the form of letters to him while I was myself a patient in that same hospital. These letters were never sent because I feared the censor, who had been dealing rather freely with my newspaper stuff, and I soon fell into the habit of stringing out a more orderly narrative.

You will understand, of course, that my chief interest in all these matters was for Roy Blakeley. *He* was *my* hero.

As to who will prove the hero of this whole extraordinary business, that shall be for you to say.

## LETTERS TO ROY BLAKELEY

Dear Roy:

I am writing this letter propped up in bed in the little hospital at Epernay and a young chatterbox

of a fellow in the cot adjoining mine says that my breathing reminds him of a goldfish. I cannot seem to breathe with my mouth shut, but I tell him that *he* can't keep his mouth shut either and that he has not my good excuse—for I was gassed.

The nurses and patients call him Archie, and he has a bullet which was lately extracted from his shoulder and which he says he intends to take home to America for a souvenir. He is wounded slightly otherwise and was operated upon (had his *retreat* cut off, he told me) and is in all ways a most diverting youngster, something like yourself, except that he rolls his R's like rapid-fire artillery. He calls the nurses "cross red" nurses, and talks incessantly.

I became acquainted with him only yesterday and I fancy he will beguile my convalescence. Seeing him lying with his eyes fixed on the rafters, I ventured to say, "A penny for your thoughts."

"What d'you think I am—a slot machine?" he retorted.

"Excuse me," I said, somewhat taken aback.

"Perrfectly excusable," he responded cheerily, and added, "Do you see that place where the rafterrs arre new—with the big irron nails?"

"I see the nails," said I.

"You can't drive a nail with a sponge," he said, "no matter how you soak it."

"Perfectly true," I said, essaying a little pleasantry of my own, "but what has that got to do with the price of onions?"

He drew his knees up in the bed in a way he has of lying. "That place is wherre a Gerrman bomb came through," he said. "I got one of those nails forr a souveneerr."

I looked at the spot with more interest. "It killed two of the nurses, didn't it?" I asked. "I heard about that. But surely, you couldn't have been here then."

"No, but my pill was—I mean my pal—fellerr by the name of Slade; he sworre——"

That was as far as he got, for one of the nurses, stepping right in range of his torrential volley of R's, began her ministrations, incidentally telling him for the hundredth time to be quiet so that other patients might sleep.

You may suppose that I was greatly interested in what he was telling me and the good old upstate rumble of that word *sworre* lingered in my mind, for I had no doubt that he was referring to your friend Tom Slade, and that a lucky chance

(or an unlucky one) had brought me to the very hospital mentioned in the newspaper account which you and I read together. Whether Slade was really his "pill" or pal, I cannot say, for he spoke of everyone as his pal, from General Foch down, but I hope to talk more with him tomorrow. He has just fallen asleep with the parting injunction to "wake me earrly, motherr, dearrrr." And silence reigns supreme.

This is all I am allowed to write today, but tomorrow I'll "recount the adventure," as you would say, which brought me here.

* * * * * *

Dear Roy:

My new acquaintance is out on our little veranda for a sun bath. His name, they tell me, is Archer —Archibald Archer—and that he has lately been in the Motorcycle Corps. I wonder if any motorcycle can make more noise than he!

I came here after taking the village of Pevy—though I did not take it all by myself. The village sits on high ground a couple of miles beyond one of the steepest, rockiest hillsides I ever saw—a place where you can measure real estate with a plumb line. Our boys took the road which verged around and up the west slope of the hill, as the

retreating Germans had done, while I took the short-cut, or rather climb, up this precipitous place.

It was thereabouts that Tom Slade fell, a fact that seems to admit of little doubt, and you must not continue to indulge in any day-dreams as to his being still alive. I am sure we are both more interested in some of the things he did while living than in the immediate circumstances of his death, and in this connection I intend to question my new acquaintance as soon as I get the chance.

Well, I had a difficult time of it scrambling up that rocky hill and it was pitch dark when I reached the top. I have made a rough pencil sketch of the locality which you may be interested in.

I fell in with our detachment about a mile out of Pevy and had a few hours' rest until dawn, when we made our advance against the village. All this has nothing to do with Tom Slade so I won't burden you with an account of how the retreating Germans made a stand before the town. But when we marched in, there was nothing to be found but burned homesteads and gas-poisoned atmosphere. It was not impossible to breathe in the open, but in the wrecked and charred build-

ings the deadly fumes lingered and I should have had sense enough to keep out of them. One of them, a makeshift hospital, had not been destroyed and I foolishly entered it.

For a few seconds I beheld a scene which struck horror to my very heart. They say over here that every American soldier fights with a wrath and desperation born of some particular discovery or experience of Hun brutality. One goes forth with the thought of a maimed and tortured comrade to give him strength; another with the memory of some violated truce or false and murderous cry of "kamerad!" Well, here was the sight to arouse in me the hatred of those beasts which I had not sufficiently felt before.

They had left their own people, *their own sick and wounded,* to suffer the agonizing death of those deadly gas fumes. If there are any degrees in loathesomeness, it seemed to me that this was more unspeakable than was the bombing of an enemy hospital.

I cannot describe what I saw, nor did I see it long. I remember groping toward a bed, on which lay the body of an old man, all the while trying, like the clumsy fool I was, to adjust my gas mask. I remember how my eyes pained and the horrible

taste in my mouth, and how my fingers seemed to be asleep. I thought I saw one of those ghastly yellow patients sit up and fall back again. The next I knew I was here in this hospital in this spotless cot, and one of the first things I was really conscious of was this youngster next me, talking. I am given to understand that I had a pretty narrow squeak of it, and that I will cease breathing like a goldfish in time.

I am going to stop writing now in order to talk to my young neighbor, Archer (or "Souvenir" as they call him). They are just bringing him in in a wheel chair and he's eating an apple. Never have I known of anyone who could eat so many apples—he lives on them.

## LETTER RECEIVED FROM ROY

*Note:* As my acquaintance with young Archer was to prove both diverting and profitable, I have boiled our conversations down into a sort of narrative in which he will appear as something of a character, and the chapters which follow were intended to be the story of *Tom Slade with the Flying Corps,* which I should present to Roy on my return to America.

Before submitting this story to you, however, I wish to include here a letter which I received from Roy at about this time. It was sent to me at the hospital by the Associated Press after it had wandered like a lost soul up and down the shifting West Front. And it came to me like a cool breeze in summer.

I did not then attach any particular significance to its contents. Indeed, I am not sure now that it is important in this place. But it interested me greatly, and you will be glad to read it because of Roy's epoch-making announcement (at which the public had better sit up and take notice) that he is himself soon to be launched on the literary sea!

* * * * * *

Dear Friend:

You remember you said you'd like me to write you a letter when I got cheered up, and tell you all the news. Most of it is about our Scout troop. Last night we had a meeting and they gave me a present of a big picture of Tom that they had enlarged from the photograph. It's great! It was in a frame and has some words underneath—"loyal, staunch and true"—quoted out of some book or other. Maybe by this time you have found out some things about him.

Pee-wee Harris said we should send you an anonymous letter—he meant unanimous letter. Honest, that kid is a scream. He's Doc Harris' son, you know. Jeb Rushmore, our camp manager up in Temple Camp, sent us an owl to have stuffed and Mr. Ellsworth told Pee-wee it would have to be sent to a taxidermist. Pee-wee asked me what that was and just for a kid I told him it was a man that drives a taxi. So he went down

to the station with the owl and asked one of the taxi men to stuff it. I should worry!

After the meeting we had a debate and I chose the subject. It was to decide who was the greatest, St. Patrick or the Fourth of July. It was decided in the affirmative. Crinkums, that was some meeting!

Maybe you'll be interested to hear that I'm elected Troop Historian, and I've got to write up all our adventures. Some job, believe me! I should worry. Mr. Ellsworth says maybe he'll get it published. He says you get good money for writing a book—but not much of it! He says if I write just like I talk, it'll be all right. I've decided to write it scout pace, kind of running, then walking—you know. It'll be like a hike. Doc Carson, our first-aid scout, says it ought to be funny, and I promised I'd chuck some chuckles into it. Pee-wee is going to make the names for the chapters. Good-night! Maybe you'll be willing to help me when you get back, especially with sunsets and green hills and weather and like that, because you have to have all those things in a book, especially weather. I said I wouldn't bother with any weather, but Doc Carson said all the characters would suffocate. Pee-wee said he's no

use for weather in stories and he always skips it, anyway. Maybe I'll have compressed air instead. Weather and prefaces—good-night!

There's some news I guess you'll be interested in. They caught Adolph Schmitt, who used to keep that grocery store—you remember? You know they found out he was a spy and he skipped. Now they've got him and he's down in Atlanta Penitentiary. A long time ago Tom used to deliver groceries for him.

Well, I'll say good-bye and if you can find out any things about Tom, you bet I'll be glad.

Your friend,

Roy Blakeley.

I have included this letter from Roy partly because it contained the earliest portentous hints of those sprightly narratives which were later to create such a stir in Boy Scout circles, but more particularly because of its reference to the Schmitt affair.

I remembered the case of Schmitt very well, for it was a nine days' wonder in Bridgeboro when this jolly, fat German grocer disappeared just in time to escape a visit from the Secret Service men. I never knew just what he was suspected

of, but I understood that incriminating papers, of a very treasonable purport, were found in the rooms over his store which he and his whole brood had so suddenly vacated.

The news that Tom Slade had worked for this man interested me, of course, and fitted pretty well with the secret knowledge which I had. Had Schmitt's Grocery been the kindergarten where the poor, ignorant boy had learned the first contaminating lesson of disloyalty? Well, here I was with my green spectacles on again, and everything looked green. In any event, I was glad to know that Schmitt had been caught and lodged in Uncle Sam's Penitentiary, where he belonged. Perhaps, I thought, the worst thing that he did was to insinuate his false reasoning into the simple mind of his employee and corrupt the clear, honest viewpoint of a young boy. . .

Narrative written for Roy Blakeley in the Epernay Hospital, and intended originally to form a complete story under the title of *Tom Slade with the Flying Corps.*

# CHAPTER I

## COMRADES

THE following story of a remarkable career was told me mostly by my young friend, Archibald Archer, who was for a time an occupant of the adjoining cot to mine in the Epernay Hospital. I shall take the liberty of enlisting him as a sort of joint narrator with myself, in the sense of using his own language when that seems desirable. Much that he told me, I jotted down in short-hand without his knowledge. He was recovering from slight injuries received while serving with "extinction" (I suppose he meant distinction) in the Motorcycle Corps. He lived on a farm in New York State, rolled his R's, ate apples by the peck when he could get them, and collected souvenirs by the ton. On the whole, I liked him and I am sure that when he was not in the mood of banter he was honest and sincere.

He and Tom Slade had crossed the ocean to-

gether as ship's boys, and Archer had remained in France resolved to win glory under "Generral Perrshing." He became an assistant cook in the Lorraine sector where his most dramatic exploit in the cause of humanity was the placing of a bowl of soup on a listening post in No Man's Land, in such a way that in the still hours of the night it tumbled its contents upon the proud head of a sumptuously attired German lieutenant who had leaned against the post.

He did not receive the Distinguished Service Cross for this deed of heroism, but no doubt it was appreciated, for he shortly became orderly to some officers and has the lace of an officer's puttee to prove it.

How he drifted back into sea service again, I do not recall. In any event, he did and worked again as a ship's boy, I suppose. Perhaps he was going home on leave. In any case, he was sitting on the "forrwarrd hatch," eating an apple, and was just about to throw the core at a purser's assistant when a torpedo struck the ship. It is one of the vain regrets of his life that he did not throw the core a moment sooner.

A few more days found him in a German prison camp where he soon became the chief entertainer

of that hapless community. Not only did he hobnob with "Old Piff," the German commandant, but his genius as a chef won him immediate recognition and prestige. Here it was that he enlivened the tedium of the prisoners by handing a bottle of ink to a German guard, who had demanded some insect dope, to rub on his face one sultry night, and the "guarrrd's" face, according to Archer, presented a diverting sight next morning. He still has the cork of this ink bottle as a treasured memento or "souveneerrr."

In the camp, to his great astonishment, he fell in with Tom Slade, who had also been gathered in with the survivors of a torpedoed transport, and the two, being kindred spirits and old friends ("comrades to the death," Archer said), had contrived to escape together and make their way through Switzerland into France.

"Slady used to be a Boy Scout," Archer told me, "and he knew all about trackin' and trailin,' and a plaguey lot of otherr things besides. Only he'd never let you know he knew 'em. He knew about signalling and 'lectricity, and aerroplane engines—he had that old storrage warrehouse of a head of his filled up with all kinds of junk."

"What did he look like when you knew him then?" I asked.

"Oh, he looked like he was mad—always sorrt o' scowling. But he was trrue as the marrinerr's compass—I'll say that forr him."

"And that's saying a great deal," said I. And this reminded me (I can't say just why) to ask if Slade had been interested in any girl back in America.

"Gurrrl? Him?" Archer said. "He had no use forr gurrls, and nutherr have I. I'd rutherr have an apple any day. Gurrls make me sick."

"Indeed," I said. "I should think the apples you eat would make you sick."

"Slady told me when we werre comin' through the Black Forest that he neverr got no letterrs from gurrls. He said most soldierrs do, but he didn't."

I was a little puzzled at this because—well, just because I was. I think you will agree, Roy, that soldiers should receive letters from girls. I was under the impression—but no matter.

When Slade and Archer reached the American front in Alsace they joined the Motorcycle Corps, becoming messengers behind the lines. In their long journey through the Black Forest and Switz-

erland they had resolved on entering this branch of the service, but their paths soon diverged, Archer's sphere of duty being in the neighborhood of Paris, while Tom rushed back and forth on his machine in the Toul sector until he was sent far west into Picardy and Flanders on some specially dangerous service. As long as Tom was attached to the command in Toul sector he and Archer met occasionally at Troyes and Chaumont where their longer errands sometimes took them. Then there came a time when Archer saw his former comrade no more, and he later heard of Tom's being sent west where the streams were running red and the paths of the cyclist messenger were being torn with jagged shell holes.

"I thought maybe Slady had run his machine pell-mell into one of those places," said Archer, "until——"

"Well, don't try to tell me now," I said. "Lie down and get some sleep. We've all tomorrow before us."

## CHAPTER II

### TOM APPEARS ON THE SCENE

OUT of the clouds he came, sweeping, veering, dodging, scattering the ghoulish night birds in his flight, the whir of his propeller heard amid the havoc of wind and storm as he raced with the elements, his soaring wings outlined with a kind of ghostly clearness in the fitful gleams of lightning.

Often, as I have lain here in the long monotony of convalescence, I have thought how he first emerged out of the clouds in wind and rain, a hurrying spectre glimpsed in sudden flashes, and of how in the end he disappeared again amid the lashing tempest, up, up, up, into the shadow of the clouds whence he had come—never to be seen alive by mortal man again.

Surely, it is not hard to fancy him a kind of spirit of the sky, visiting this war-scourged land of France, and withdrawing to his kindred elements when his tragic work was done.

It seems fitting that this creature of fate should have come and gone in this way; that there should have been no prosy beginning or end to his career. And I am glad, Roy, for your sake, and for mine and for his and—yes, for the sake of his sturdy champion, Archer—that only a few of his earlier and more conspicuous exploits are known and remembered.

I have it from Archer that the night of this first strange thing which I am about to tell was of intense darkness and incessant, wind-blown rain. Occasionally, he said, quick, sharp flashes of lightning illumined the sky and at such times he could see the clouds, as he said, "churrned up like clabberred milk."

It was the terminating storm of a long season of rain which had wrought havoc to the roads and railroad lines—already in sorry plight from overuse and German artillery fire. Great dependence, it seemed, was placed upon those sturdy youngsters of the Motorcycle Corps, particularly just then, when the wires were down, their supporting poles sprawling in mud or flood.

Archer told me that on that night they could plainly see from Nancy, where he was stationed, the little church in Chateau Seulans across the

Lorraine border, and could distinguish pigmy figures of German sentries there, so vivid was the lightning at times.

He says that he had not seen Slade for nearly a year, though I hardly think it could have been as long as that. In any case, he had been stationed at Nancy for a month or two and his duties in the quiet sector (Sleepy Hollow, they called it) were hardly more exciting than those of an American letter-carrier. It rained almost unceasingly, the soldiers drilled and played cards, and baled out their trenches, which were "running rriverrs," to quote my young friend. Sometimes Fritzie made a night raid and the boys in khaki made a party call for good manners. But there wasn't much going on.

"What would you do if you had a *real* job—something urrgent?" Archer says one of the boys asked him.

"I'd take carre of it, all right," he answered.

"You'd need a boat to get from here to Chaumont now," the other fellow said. "Did you look into Mess Dugout 4? It's nothing but a mudhole.

"Wherre I'm sent, I'll go," said Archer. "I don't carre if it's to Berrlin."

"Would you make a try for Paris if you had a message for General Pershing?" his companion teased.

"No, I'd send worrd to General Perrshing to come herre and get it," Archer retorted; which apparently ended the talk.

At last something happened. In the latter part of the afternoon they got a signal from the squint bag * and hauled the thing down, the rain pattering upon its taut bulk and streaming off like a waterfall. The occupant of its cosy little car announced that the Germans seemed to be massing all the way from Frouard to the Marne Canal, and that barges were moving westward along the Canal from La Garde. The observer thought they might be bringing troops from the railroad town of Berthelingen, or from Azoudange, where the prison camp was. It had long been necessary for the Germans to rob Peter to pay Paul and if they were depleting their guard at the great camp it probably meant that some big enterprise was in the air. A flier was promptly sent up to reconnoiter eastward, but the weather was too much for him and he came down like a drowned bat.

By dusk, the wind was blowing a gale out of

* Observation balloon.

the southwest, driving the rain in sheets so that the squint bag which had ascended again pulled and strained at its anchorage, dragging sideways and jerking for all the world like some monstrous fish on the line. They soon hauled it down for fear of the cable snapping. A drenched courier arrived from Colombey, below Toul, with the news that every wire in that section was down and in a hopeless tangle and the rails west of Neufchateau were sunken in swamp. When you hear mention of railroads in France you must put out of your thoughts altogether the Pennsylvania and the New York Central—even the Erie, I am tempted to say; for these roads here are mere toy lines with ridiculous puffing slow-poke engines and tracks which disappear on the smallest provocation.

A little before dark, Archer tells me, he was summoned before his superiors and asked if he believed he could get as far as Brienne, or perhaps Troyes, with a message. It was hoped that communication might be open between one or other of those places and Paris, where the commander was at the time. He answered that he believed he could reach Brienne and was despatched at once with messages for transmission, of which,

of course, he did not know the contents more than that they pertained to the enemy's movements and were urgent in the extreme.

West of Vaucouleurs he found the roads all but impassible. The wind was blowing a tempest, driving the rain into his face so that he was reduced to picking his way at a snail's pace. The darkness was intense, save for the occasional gleams of forked lightning which illumined the sky and gilded the clouds with a frightful, portentous brightness.

"It was the kind of weatherr," says Archer, with characteristic humor, "when folks always say, 'Pity the poorr sailorrs on a night like this.' "

He had passed through Gondrescourt inquiring whether communication was open with points west when he heard the sharp report of an aircraft gun, apparently from somewhere in the town, and looked up just as a flash of lightning lit the sky.

His own simple description of what he saw impressed me very much indeed. "The clouds were small and all feathery like, as if they had been pulled aparrt," he said; "the edges all ragged and very bright, like silverr. It made you feel scarey as if the darrk parrt behind 'em didn't belong to this worrld at all."

Well, it was just in that quick flash that he saw moving across one of those illumined patches an airplane, its outline as clear as a silhouette.

"Forr a minute," said Archer, with a graphic power which surprised me, "it seemed as if it was one of those witches sailing through the sky, and it made me feel creepy, as you might say."

Then, all in a moment, the darkness closed about it, but, listening, he could hear, in the brief intervals of the tumult, the noise of its propeller, and the sound struck terror to his heart, for he knew by the intermittent whir that it was a Hun machine. Archer tells me that this characteristic of the Hun planes makes them always recognizable at night. "Theirr hearrt beats different," as he said.

They must have been a watchful gun crew in the town to spy this vulture of the night, but their shot had done no damage evidently, for the grim thing moved along, visible now and again over the cyclist's head. When the impediments of marsh and washed-out roads caused him to slacken his speed, the flier did so also, manouvering apparently, now visible in the quick flashes, now only heard amid the rain and wind.

At Aubinal they had a searchlight as well as

an aircraft gun and, hearing the flier, they threw a long column about the sky and fixed him in a circle of light. Then the sharp report of the gun and the machine dipped, for all the world like a boy dodging a pursuer. Twice, thrice, the report rang out, the cyclist pausing among the little group of excited villagers. Twice, thrice, the machine dipped, while the watchers held their breath in suspense. But the plane resumed its course, still visible in bold relief in the circle of light.

Then suddenly there appeared in the sky another plane (presumably, from somewhere in the neighborhood) rising in pursuit of the enemy craft. So furious was the lashing of the storm that Archer was thrilled with admiration at the sight of one of his friends braving the perils of that tempestuous night to bring down an enemy flier, and as he rode on out of the little town, fighting his own way in the blinding storm, he wondered who the bold pursuer could be—whether French or American.

High amid the tumult he could hear shots, which were presently drowned in the turbulence of the storm, and he had no further glimpse of either craft.

"I thought our flierr had hit him and sent him

down," said Archer, "and I says to myself, 'That fellerr is a hero, all right,' and I hoped he was an Amerrican. I wonderred what the Hun plane was doing so far behind ourr lines on a night like that, but I didn't have time to wonderr much. Anyways, I was glad it was overr 'cause it made me feel kind of spooky to see that black thing like a ghost or a witch or something following me. I made up my mind I'd ask about who brought it down, so's I'd know who it was."

His way now took him through the flat country east of Brienne where he hoped that his spooky, drenching journey might end.

The land here was turned into a quagmire, his machine splashing through mud and water so that he must pause now and again to wrench and haul it out of some mushy hollow.

The country thereabouts was quite unpopulated, consisting of vast flat meadows, entirely submerged. The blighting Hun line had once embraced the locality, and its refugees had not yet returned to a security so precarious. So there was not even the dim lamplight from a peasant's cottage to cheer the hapless messenger.

I have not put young Archer forward as a

hero, and I shall not, for I know in whom you are mainly interested, but I think the courage he showed that night was remarkable. The road, as I understood him, crossed a veritable inland sea on an embankment about a foot submerged and had he verged from the invisible causeway he and his machine would have been plunged into a considerable depth of water. He was guided by his instinct and such of the fallen poles as had not been washed away.

But it was all quite hopeless, as he realized before he was a quarter of the way across the flooded area. His wheels, sunk in mud, were all but inextricable, and he finally realized, or acknowledged, the terrible predicament he was in. There he was, the plaything of a lashing tempest, marooned upon a sunken road, wrenching and tugging at his wheel as it settled lower and lower in the mud. Above him the thunder crashed, now and again the lightning rent the sky showing the heavens thick with those little restless, feathery clouds. His face felt hot and sore from the beating of the rain against it. I suspect that his nerve was wavering and little wonder.

Then he heard amid the uproar the whirring of

an airplane and he stood stark still listening. Perhaps his distracted mind made him susceptible to vague imaginings, and he experienced a feeling of horror at the thought of this uncanny creature of the night hovering in the clouds above him, until he realized that it was probably the friendly plane which, having brought down the enemy machine, was on its way with messages to Paris. The thought afforded him a measure of relief and reconciled him to his own desperate plight. What matter, so long as the urgent news were carried? And what an airman he must be who could fly through this inferno, braving thunder, lightning and storm. . .

I must tell you this in Archer's own words.

"I was tugging at my machine, trying to haul it out of the mud, but everry jerrk I gave it I went deeperr in the mud myself. I rememberr how I wrenched on the front wheel, this way and that, so my headlight pointed every which way and I could see the waterr all around—as much as half a mile on both sides of me, I should think. Beforre that I didn't know how much of the country was flooded. I seemed to be in the middle of the ocean, as you might say, only in places there were

little islands, like, where the water didn't quite cover the fields. I knew I couldn't get my machine out of the mud and I thought I'd be betterr off if I left it and waded over to one of those islands because the road I was on was underr waterr and was washing away, sorrt of.

"So I turrned my handle-barr so's to throw the searrchlight around overr that flooded space and try to decide which way to go. I thought maybe I could get across it quickerr that way; and then run to the nearest town. All of a sudden, while I was throwing my light like that, I hearrd the buzz of an airrplane verry nearr and a very loud whistlin' sound like this (he simulated a loud, shrill whistling) and then I hearrd a splash quite a long way off and then more splashing not so loud.

"I turrned my light in that direction and saw a big airrplane comin' to a standstill in the waterr and the rain was pourin' down off its planes just like a waterrfall. I thought it must be the flierr that brought down the Hun machine, and I thought he must be wrecked and was dead, maybe.

"Forr a minute I held my handle-barr so's the light was right on the plane and then I had a

"HOLD UP YOUR HANDS; IF YOU DON'T, I'LL SHOOT!"
—*Page* 82.

good scarre, you can bet, forr I could see plain as day on the body of it and on the rudderr the black cross with a white borrderr like they have on Hun machines!"

The dramatic descent of this apparition through that tempestuous storm, and its clear outline as it stood focussed in the circle of brightness thrown by Archer's headlight, must have been quite enough to disconcert him. For a moment, he says, he stood there trembling, the wind howling about him, the rain beating on his face, the heavy darkness shutting out everything save that meteor-like thing out of the troubled heavens.

Then a figure emerged from under its dripping plane and called to him. In the high wind he could not hear what this apparition said, the voice seeming thin and spent in contrast with the tumult, or, as Archer said, "as if it came from a ghost." Then he caught the words "landing" and "guide."

He was not greatly surprised at that, for it was not uncommon to find Germans speaking English. For a moment he hesitated, then, drawing his side arm, he stepped forward through the water, toward the strange visitor. Again the man spoke, but the wind was away from him and

Archer could not hear what he said. He confessed that he was not accustomed to encounters with the enemy, but he knew what to do and called, "Hold up your hands if you surrenderr; if you don't, I'll shoot"; all the while wading through the flooded meadow.

The stranger, so he says, raised his hands very leisurely and lifted his goggles up on his forehead, for all the world like some dear old grandma, which tickled Archer's funny bone. This finicky little act seemed odd in one of those adventurous denizens of the sky, and I have heard others besides Archer speak of it. Then the stranger, standing there amid the screaming wind and blinding storm, raised his hands as if to surrender. But Archer was not unfamiliar with the "kamarad" game, and he advanced cautiously. The screaming of the wind through the wiring of the machine was terrific but through it, as he stumbled along, he fancied (I quote his own words) that he could "hearr the worrd 'souveneerrr' as if it was in the airrr, sorrt of."

Then suddenly he stopped amazed to hear these words uttered in plain English:

"I suppose you're after a piece of this airplane

for a souvenir. How is it you ain't chewin' an apple?"

He stood where he was, too dumbfounded to speak, and looked at the drenched figure in dismay.

"Can I take my hands down now?" the flier said in a familiar, dull voice, but smiling.

As you probably have guessed, it was none other than Archer's former comrade, Tom Slade, who stood facing him.

"'Till I hearrd that about souveneerrrs I neverr thought anything about it," Archer said, as a sort of climax to this extraordinary episode, and raising his knees high up in the bed as was his custom; "but as soon as he reminded me of it I made up my mind I'd get a piece of that bloomin' machine to take home—by Christopherrr!"

That seemed to be the main consideration with him.

"Do you think you are fonder of souvenirs than of apples?" I inquired slyly, for his narrative was interrupted by the nurse's bringing him one from a box of them which I understood had made a long and patriotic pilgrimage from the Catskills.

"Therre's only one thing about apples I like,"

he observed, as he took an enormous bite, "and that's the taste of 'em. Slady used to always kid me about apples—but you can bet yourr life I got three tacks out of the leatherr seat of that gol-bloomin' Hun machine!"

## CHAPTER III

### SLADE'S EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE

INDEED, to close this important matter now, Archer got considerably more than the three tacks from the leather seat. He got a lock-nut from that "infernal combustion engine," (I suppose he meant *internal*), a splinter of fabulous value from the casing of a Hun altimétre, and something which looked like an American collar button, but which he assured me had had an adventurous career above the clouds. He found it in the car of the machine and if it was a collar button, why, it might possibly have been worn by the Kaiser, so it was of priceless value in any case.

"What arre you doing herre?" Archer says he finally managed to ask, "in a Hun——"

"I'm standing here," said Slade in a dry way, which Archer says was characteristic of him. "Help me lift out this bag of sand, will you? There isn't any time to talk. I escaped in this

thing from the prison camp at Azoudange. They sent away pretty near the whole guard. They're goin' to attack. They didn't know I knew anything about aviation. Hurry—you'll have to sit there."

"What became of the fellerr that went up afterr you back therre?" Archer asked.

"He had to go down," said Slady dryly; "on account of the weather. Hurry up. I've been hanging over you waiting for you to show me a place to light, but you never would and that's just like you. It wasn't till you got stuck, just as I knew you would, and moved your light all around that I got a good squint. Chuck it out—quick."

Archer climbed the step and looked into the cosy little car of a German Albatross, two-seater fighting plane. Throwing his light about, he saw in a quick glance the luxurious seat of the pilot and the plainer one for the accompanying flier—a heavy bag of sand lashed upon it. He saw the compass, the altimétre, the revolution counter, and something which he said looked like a shade roller all wound round with oilskin.

"Don't touch that," Slade warned as Archer's souvenir-loving fingers lingered about it; "its

the rolling-map—it shows a lot of things behind the German lines."

Archer climbed into the car, the floor of which was covered with water like a leaky boat, and threw the bag from the seat he was to occupy.

"You might have had sense enough to know you could never get anywheres in the flat country tonight," Slade told him. "Why didn't you follow the Marne ridge?"

" 'Cause I didn't know about it," Archer confessed frankly.

"Where are you going—to Paris?"

"Yes, or the nearest point of communication."

"Good I picked you up," said Slade.

Archer said he was so "flabberrgasted" at this almost miraculous meeting with Slade that it was some minutes before he realized the significance of all that had occurred. "You couldn't make Slady talk," he told me. "He'd only say what was necessary and even then he was kind of clumsy telling things. That was why he never botherred much with girrls, I guess. Maybe that's why they neverr botherred with him."

"Maybe one did bother with him and you didn't know anything about it," I suggested.

"Nix," said Archer, with great decision.

Then he went on to tell me at some length much that he himself did not learn until afterward, and even then extracted from his hero much as a dentist draws teeth. "I had to give him gas to get anything out of him," he said.

It was a very remarkable story, and I will tell it now.

One night about a month before this Slade, on his motorcycle, had been carrying a message from headquarters at Louzanne to a point some twenty miles distant when his machine ran into a shell hole near the village of La Pavin. This village was held by the French under constant menace from the enemy.

The hole was very deep and Slade's head striking a part of his machine as he fell, he was stunned and lay unconscious in the ragged excavation for what he afterwards judged must have been several hours.

When he regained consciousness he found himself in a predicament which must have struck horror even to such a stolid nature as his. There he lay upon the wreck of his machine in a stifling atmosphere of gasolene. Where he was he could not imagine at first but he was thoughtful enough not to strike a match to light his acetylene search-

light which, moreover, as he later found, was broken.

Presently as he was able to gather his wits, he remembered what had happened, but why the sickening fumes of gasolene should permeate the place he could not guess until, feeling about above him, he discovered the appalling cause of this condition. The shell hole was completely closed by a hard, irregular surface which felt warm to the touch.

I leave you to imagine his feelings. He told Archer that he knew his consciousness was but temporary. "I knew I'd faint any minute," he said. Yet he displayed enough of his characteristic calmness to reflect that this complete closing of the hole could not have been of long duration or he would be dead already. Whatever happened must have happened within a very few minutes, he thought.

"That was just like Slady," Archer said, as he told me about it. "He neverr got excited. He always just sat down and thought what was the best thing to do next."

Yet I think he must have been somewhat unnerved then. In any case, he felt of his gasolene tank and found that the feed pipe had been

wrenched away; not so much as a drop of gasolene was there left in it. The slightest spark in that horrible, dark prison would have resulted in a death more terrible than any which the ingenious Huns could have devised.

Again Slade felt of the warm, hard surface above him and ran his fingers in the interstices which seemed straight and regular. The surface was of a warmth much greater than the stifling warmth of his prison, like a warm radiator.

His head began to pound and he suffered from a straining feeling about his eyes, which was ominous, as an army surgeon has since told me. Yet with the few remaining minutes of life which apparently remained to him, Tom Slade crouched upon the wreck of his machine and *thought.*

I am telling you this not after his own fashion of telling it, as Archer repeated it to me, for evidently Slade had no idea at all of the story possibilities of his own experiences.

The result of his thinking was that with a piece of broken glass from his headlight he hurriedly dug a deep hole in the earth in which he deposited his papers, filling the hole again and smoothing it over. By the sheer power of his will he kept his wits while he was doing it and having finished

he had barely the strength to bang with a rock against the hard surface above him.

"What did you think it was?" Archer says he asked him.

"I thought it was a tank," Slade answered, "and I wasn't going to take any chances with my messages till I knew for certain everything was all right." The result proved that this precaution had been a wise one.

I suspect that those few seconds of frantic banging, while he fought a losing battle against his ebbing consciousness, were perhaps the most terrific in all his adventurous career. He told Archer that his head swam and that finally he fell exhausted, struggling like a maniac for each breath he drew, his eyes throbbing madly.

He did not know whether the hard roof actually moved, for everything seemed to be moving now, and he was wavering on the edge of unconsciousness. The last rational thought that he remembered having was that the tank must have been deserted. His leg slipped between the spokes of his wheel, he heard a strange noise, saw a little round light, and thought it was a spark which would ignite the fumes and. . .

What he really saw as he passed out of that

borderland of consciousness was a star in the bright, clear heaven.

They lifted him, limp and all but lifeless, out of that poisoned dungeon and laid him on the cool earth and searched him for his papers. They had taken the little village of La Pavin in a night attack. The huge metal monster which had shut him in stood hard by and when he came to his senses he saw it there, brutal in its power and its ugliness—heartless, irresistible, horrible. For I will tell you on my own account that of all the engines of combat or of locomotion which man has made there is nothing so loathesome in its suggestiveness of soulless cruelty as one of these same monster tanks.

But Herr Von Something-or-other did not find the papers of the messenger, and the messenger only smiled when they asked him about them. They raised the broken motorcycle and looked about beneath it with flashlights. But there were no papers. And so they took the messenger into the village and put him in the little dressing station there and gave him oxygen and used a pulmotor and brought him round. He said afterwards (I mean long afterwards) that the Germans had treated him well, been kind to him, and

that he did not believe all the tales of German atrocities which he had heard. He said these Germans seemed like friends. I mention this because he was subsequently accused of professing sympathy for them and came very near to being court-martialled for it. Archer says it was just his blunt sense of common fairness, a notable characteristic of his, and that what he said has reference only to the treatment he received on that particular occasion. In any event, nothing came of it.

Slade was taken, along with some of the defenders of La Pavin, to the big prison camp at Azoudange, on the Marne Canal a few miles east of Nancy. You will remember that as the place from which the balloon observer thought that troops were being sent forward toward the lines. It is in Lorraine, not far from Saarburg.

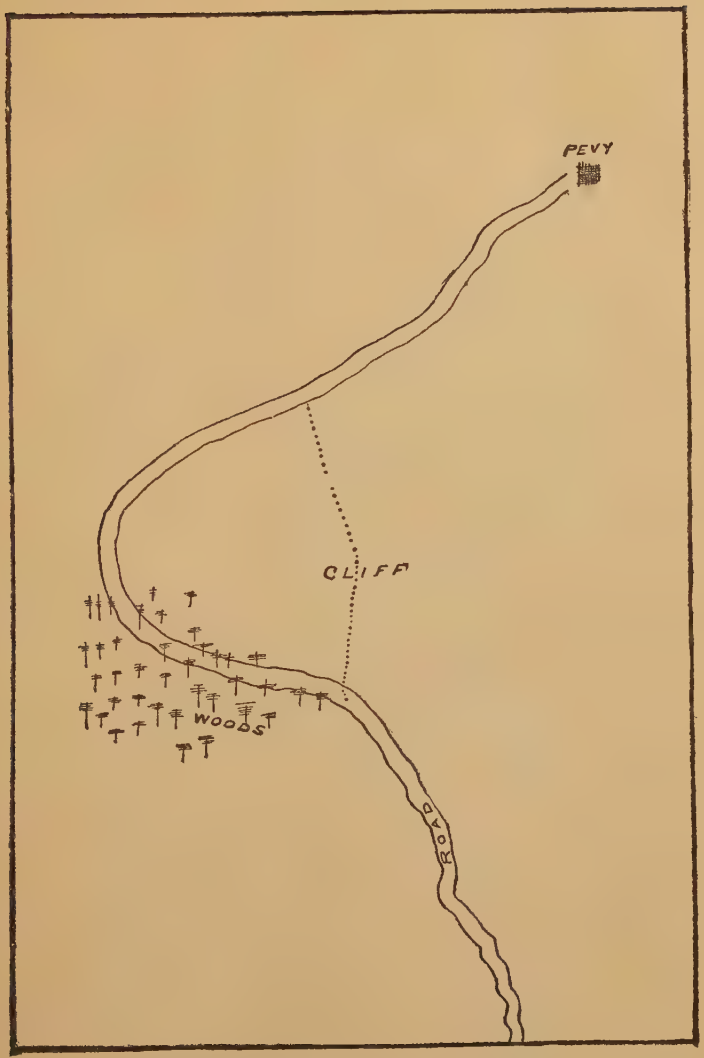
There Slade remained, and there he was on the stormy night of his great adventure, which was to prove his brevet flight,* and bring him face to face with his former comrade, Archer.

I suppose you know that Slade had always taken a great interest in aviation. He had a Boy Scout

* The supreme and final test for an airman before he enters upon his regular war duties.

badge for proficiency in this business, so Archer says, and was pretty thoroughly posted on airplane construction and mechanics. How far into the science these Scout studies took him you may be better able to tell than I, but that they aroused a very intelligent interest in these things there is no doubt. In the early period of his service in the Motorcycle Corps he was attached to the airdrome at Calleaux where he was very popular with the "fledglings." He tried, indeed, to get into that branch of the service, but without success. Archer says that Slade's practical knowledge of gas engines was very thorough, he was something of an expert on cycle motors, and seemed perfectly familiar with the type used in aircraft.

I suspect he must have learned a good deal in the hours of leave which he spent among the fliers who were learning in the airdrome at Calleaux. Certain it is that he hobnobbed with them in their barracks, for Archer says that Slade told him of fixing their Victrola and varying the monotony of the single record which they had by boring a hole in it a little off centre, producing a "wierrd kind of music," as Archer said. For this ingenious novelty Slade was taken up with one




ROUGH SKETCH OF THE ROAD TO PEVY.

of the instructors and permitted to "handle the broomstick" all by himself. Whatever other experiences he had among that fraternal company he did not communicate to Archer, nor to any one else apparently.

And so we find him in the big barbed wire enclosure at Azoudange, stolid and silent, with an uncertain quantity of more or less superficial knowledge of aeronautics in his tow-head, and all the reckless courage of a heaven-born adventurer.

It was characteristic of Slade that he did not let the guards nor even his fellow prisoners know that he understood German and could speak it fairly well. "What's the use of telling anything you don't have to tell?" he said to Archer. "And that was Slady all overr," Archer remarked. So vivid were these little things he told me of his friend that sometimes I almost felt as if I had known him and I certainly wished that I could have seen him.

Well, a week or so before this stormy night Slade heard a German major who was known among the prisoners by the martial name of Bottle-nose talking to another officer about the quiet sector across the lines where the Americans were playing baseball and having concerts. He lis-

tened with ears which would have done credit to a startled hare.

Within two days he knew that preparations were on foot for a surprise attack upon a very large scale; that the Germans were planning to take advantage of the embarrassed condition of communications behind the American lines and the supposed difficulties of observation. Thus bad weather may sometimes be turned to good account. From the confines of his spacious prison he could see the dimmed lights upon the canal near by and hear the voices which told him that barges were passing along toward La Garde, bound for the front in French Lorraine.

On the day before this culminating storm, the wire which enclosed the prison camp and which had been dead for some time (owing, it was said, to the scarcity of fuel and impairment of generating machinery), was electrified, and that very night the entire guard was marched away, save for a few old men and cripples who did "stretch" duty. * Archer has it from Slade that one of these, an old German with snow white hair, limped back and forth on crutches outside the wires, cov-

* A condition in which a number of guards around the enclosure being removed, those remaining must lengthen their patrols in order to cover the ground.

ering his alloted distance of a couple of hundred yards or more in a steady downpour, and was shot in the morning because he had collapsed in his tracks.

I leave you to imagine the effect that all these portentous movements and preparations must have produced in the mind of a prisoner who must needs watch them and be impotent to do anything. The fact that the big prison camp was so near the border and the battle line, where these hurried preparations were intensive, was enough to distress the soul of a patriot. "Slady was all nutty about it," Archer said.

Late in the afternoon of that memorable day, Slade watched several German officers, intent upon their observations through a powerful field glass. They were evidently watching the observation balloon to which I have already referred. Slade was required to hold an umbrella over the head of "Herr General" while he studied the tiny object which bobbed in the distance.

They were troubled about this little speck for it had an eye—an eye in a long tube, just like their own, which could see a very long way. And the final number of their program of preparation was yet to come. If they were going to get the

troops from Pfalzburg through before morning they would have to begin these movements before dark.

"Ich wuensche sein verdammter cable wuerde zerbrechen," said Herr General; which meant that he wished the cable of the balloon would break.

If they had waited a little longer they would have had the satisfaction of seeing this aerial eavesdropper hauled down in fear of that very catastrophe. But instead they discussed the possibility of spearing * the thing by airplane.

Herr General said that no airplane could go out in such weather.

Major Von Something-or-other insisted that it could—that the Germans could do anything.

The upshot of it was that they sent Slade with a message written in German to the telegraph station in the commandant's quarters. Slade read it on the way and saw that it was a despatch to the great German airdrome near Dossenheim requesting that a skillful flier with rocket equipment be sent at once to the prison camp. Scarcely had he delivered it into the hands of the operator when the young major followed him to make

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* Approaching a balloon in an airplane and puncturing it with a rocket.

sure that it had been sent. Slade returned to the leaky barracks where he lived and on the way "bunked plunk into Bottle-nose," as he said, "and had to salute him and say I was sorry."

From which I take it that Slade's mind was wool-gathering. I have often wished that I knew his thoughts in reference to his actions. I have sometimes felt that if I could have seen him I might have pierced his inpenetrable stolidness and reserve. These things that I am telling you in a fairly orderly way leaked out of him, as it were, in his subsequent chats with Archer. The nurses here have told me something of Slade's own talk, but it was fragmentary and unsatisfactory. The more I know of him, the more I wish I could have met him. He was a sort of stormy petrel of the service, and because he "talked clumsy, sorrt of," as Archer puts it, and said very little at that, he seems to have acquired rather more the reputation of an adventurer than that of a patriot. But if Archer knew anything to his friend's discredit, he has not told it to me, and probably would not do so since his friend is dead. Very likely he knew of nothing.

But to get back to Slade. What thought he had in mind on that momentous rainy afternoon,

who shall say? He told Archer that he sat down in his barracks and wrote half a dozen notes, all in the same phraseology.

"Did you ever see any of Slade's handwriting?" it occurred to me to ask.

"Surre. Why?"

"Have you any of it now?"

"Nope," said Archer; "he didn't botherr about letterrs. Why?"

"I just wondered," I replied; "I think I may have seen his handwriting."

"Maybe back in Bridgeboro, hey?"

"Maybe," I said. "Go on with the story."

"Well," said Archer, "as near as I can rememberr, this is what he wrote—half a dozen notes—all the same:

> "The Germans are massing from Champrey as far east as the mountains. They are going to attack tomorrow. This is to let you know. They are going to advance in close formation."

Having written these notes, Archer says Slade told him he went out and picked up as many stones. There was some string which had come around packages sent to prisoners from the American Red Cross, and with this he bound each note

to a stone. On a junk heap near the barracks he had often noticed certain stiff, rusty pieces of heavy wire turned into eyes at one end. They were two feet or so long and he had always supposed them to be old ramrods from rifles or muskets. He picked out half a dozen of these, tied the eye ends together with a piece of string and hung them about his neck so that they depended against his back and under his jacket and trousers. The stones he distributed in his pockets.

Then he went to a sordid little shack where languished a certain French soldier, Lauzerne by name, whom he knew and liked. Here is a time when I should like to know just what he said. But at least I know what Lauzerne said. Slade asked him if he would be willing to help him in a certain matter that night "if things came around right." Lauzerne asked what it was, for, though presumably of French impulsiveness and generosity, he was a cautious poilu. Slade told him ("I suppose in that stupid drawl of his," Archer observes) that if a certain German airplane should make a landing on the grounds that night he hoped to go away in it and advise the allies of their peril.

"Ziss ees—what you say—crazee!" exclaimed Lauzerne.

To which Slade replied that all he wanted Lauzerne to do was to turn the propeller for him, but that he wasn't sure of anything yet.

We have it on his own authority that Lauzerne looked at him with dismay for full half a minute and that Slade said, "What's the matter with you?"

Then it was that Lauzerne threw his hands into the air, his fingers spread wide, and uttered the national exclamation of France, more eloquent than the Marseillaise:

"Oi, la, la! Oi, la, la!"

# CHAPTER IV

## FIRE AND WATER

As you know, the observation balloon was finally drawn down on account of the weather, and this happened before there was time for an enemy flier to attack it. A very short while after this occurred, however, a big German plane was seen manouvering in the thick sky, and presently came swooping down, clearing the wires by only a few feet and coming to a standstill near one end of the big enclosure. If the despatch of Herr General had instructed the flier to proceed upon his errand of destruction direct from his hangar he might have accomplished his purpose.

The weather conditions were so unfavorable for flight and the landing was made with such conspicuous skill that even the prisoners who hurried to the spot, hungry for any diversion, cheered moderately as the airman, swathed in furs and oilskins, climbed out, threw his helmet into the

car and, pushing rudely among them, hurried to the commandant's quarters. The little group of forlorn prisoners soon dispersed, leaving one apparently half-interested onlooker peering idly into the car.

That onlooker was Thomas Slade.

Archer tells me from his own observation that this plane was of the bad weather type, oilskin coverings, and every part enclosed where enclosure was feasible. Like most of the German planes (and everything else German for that matter) grace and speed were sacrificed to strength and if any aircraft can be said to be built to withstand the buffettings of the weather, the German bad-weather Albatross is the one to do it.

I do not know how Slade felt in face of his great adventure nor whether he considered the punishment which might befall for failure or even for meddling. What he did, he did quickly, for dallying was dangerous business. For a few tense moments he waited, patiently but anxiously. If he had any nerves at all I think they must have been on edge then.

Presently, Lauzerne appeared out of the darkness.

"Have you got the can?" Slade asked him.

Lauzerne handed him a battered tin can out of which he had been drinking water for six months.

"Hand it here and go back a ways and watch if there's anybody coming."

Like lightning he removed his almost threadbare jacket, tore off his shirt, slipped his jacket on again, and tore the shirt into several strips.

"Anybody coming?" he whispered, as he broke the string about his neck. He next pulled the pieces of rag about half way through the ring ends of the six rusted bars and to the other end of each bar he fastened a stone with a note wrapped about it.

"Anybody coming?" I can almost hear his impatient whispering.

No one.

He climbed into the car with his strange burden, and drew a canful of gasolene out of the tank. Even in his hurry and peril he was thoughtful enough to ascertain whether there was plenty of gas. Then he was ready—if one can be said to be ready for a flight in a storm who is without any garment save a threadbare suit of khaki.

But he was not destined thus to depart. He had just laid his message-bearing missiles in the car and hung the can upon the bar of his steering

gear so that it would not spill its contents with the tipping of the machine, when his companion communicated to him the appalling news that someone was coming. Slade descended from the car, but had not time enough to remove his telltale equipment. Lowering himself upon his hands and knees he did the only thing that he could do in his predicament, which was to creep under the axle bar of the wheels and lie parallel with it in the hope that he might appear as part of its shadow. In this precarious situation he pulled his coat over his head and kept his hands well under his body so that he presented no human sign or feature to the casual glance. You may be interested to know that he told Archer this trick, as he called it, was customary in the art of stalking and that he had learned it when a Boy Scout. So his scouting did him a good turn—to use the phrase you are so fond of.

Presently he could hear ponderous footsteps and was aware of someone approaching rapidly. He felt that his great enterprise was soon to have an ignominous if not a fatal end. What his feelings must have been you may imagine, but he lay motionless and scarcely breathed.

The man approached the car so that Slade could

have touched his feet. There he remained for a minute, then turned and went away. Without so much as stirring Slade waited until the footfalls had receded beyond earshot. Then he crawled out. An oilskin tarpaulin had been laid over the opening of the car, raised upon a hoop and buttoned to the sides to shed the rain.

"Quick!" he whispered. "Are you there?"

As his companion approached he removed this tarpaulin (which could not be used thus in flight) and wound it around his body and legs, having first taken his seat in the car.

"Do you want to go?" he asked, ready to cast out the sandbag on his friend's word.

"Oi, la, la! I am not so crazee!" his companion repeated.

"Well, then, stand ready."

Slade buckled himself in, fastened on the helmet, and turned on the little electric light and carefully examined and tested the controls. The rudders responded as he expected, the elevating planes moved to his touch. He located the contact button and made sure of that. He felt of the gas manet and made sure that there was nothing to differentiate it essentially from the same thing on French machines. Such differences as he

found were merely of style and location. "It is a matter of daring, not of learning;" he remembered those words of Wilbur Wright's.

I think there is no moment in Slade's career when he appears so admirable as when he sat there in that Hun machine, self-assured and confident, yet forgetting nothing that he might need to know after starting. "He always used his brains," Archer said.

"Give her a few spins," he finally said. He wished the engine to suck in the mixture.

"All right—again."

"The motor took, first crack out of the box," he told Archer; "and as soon as I felt the vibration I knew everything was all right—it made me feel as if I could do anything. I pulled back my manet, full gas, grabbed my elevating plane control, and sailed over the barbed wires hitting right into the wind."

"It made me laugh," Archer said, "how he always spoke about *his* controls as if he owned them."

The story of that extraordinary flight, at least the first stage of it, remains a mystery. It is not until Archer enters upon the scene that we get anything approaching a satisfactory view of that

wild night in the skies. There is no doubt that he passed over Arracourt, for one of his missiles landed there, giving timely warning. The rag which was run through the eye end of the metal bar had been dipped in gasolene and ignited but was sufficiently far from the message at the other end of the bar to save it from the flames, particularly as the stone had a tendency to cause the whole contrivance to descend vertically. The flaming rag, as was intended, attracted instant attention and brought a curious horde of people to the field where it fell. Another of these fell in Pont a Mousson where, it is thought, the flier may have seen the light of a burning house and considered the place to be important. It was picked up by a little girl and was the cause of messengers being immediately despatched to Nomeny and Thiaucourt and to Toul, where heavy reserves were in billets.

Only one of the remaining four of these missives was ever found—or at least, reported. That was in the village of Lareaux among the hills about thirty miles southeast of Verdun. So the flier must have succeeded in following the battle line for seventy or more miles in a northwesterly direction. This last missive resulted in heavy reenforcements

being sent from the Verdun sector eastward. Archer wished that he had one of these strange meteors for a "souveneerr" and I should like to have one myself. Particularly, I should like to see Slade's official report of his flight, but the powers that be will not vouchsafe me a glimpse of it.

Archer thinks that after this seventy miles of bucking the wind and rain, Slade must have ascended above the storm somewhere in the neighborhood of the hills which filled the old Verdun salient. He told Archer that for a while he was in quiet air about twenty-eight hundred feet up, but came down in hopes of seeing the lights of towns into which he might drop his remaining missives. He said he lost control in the storm and for a while was almost entirely at the mercy of the elements, turning turtle once, and regaining and keeping his stability by tremendous effort, while being blown in a southwesterly direction. He must have been in the greatest peril at that time.

At last he saw the lights of a large town, or rather that bright haze caused by the blending of many lights, which suggests a populous centre. Here he hoped to make a landing if the

lightning showed him a suitable field, and he tried to manouver over the place, awaiting a flash. But he was borne in a southwesterly direction and had all he could do to hold his plane stable. Archer thinks the town was probably Commercy.

In any event, his drifting southward continued until he was above Gondrescourt where he descended into the straight wind current out of the west and found his progress comparatively easy. He was flying due west then, into the very teeth of the wind but it was not as "choppy" at his height as the belated cyclist found it.

It was just after Archer rode out of Gondrescourt toward the west, that he heard the shots and saw the airplane in the openings of the clouds.

Slade's one object then was to make a landing, but he must wait for a propitious flash of lightning to show him a place. He realized now, as he had not in all the haste of his mad flight, that however friendly his errand he would be shot as soon as the fatal whir of his propeller was heard and the gun crews got a sight of him. With the big black Hun cross upon his machine he was as good as dead if he attempted landing in a town, even supposing he could discover a safe landing place.

And this, apparently, was the outcome of his

heroic flight—that he should be a sort of outcast in the troubled sky. He had not anticipated the difficulties of landing in a Hun plane.

As we know, he had twice succeeded in dodging anti-aircraft fire, and he was now resolved to make a try at landing in the devasted flat country which stretched for miles east of Brienne. He knew this country well, had crossed it many times on his motorcycle, and had seen it flooded on one notable occasion when he had ridden from Alsace to Flanders.

He could not, of course, even by flying dangerously low in such weather, pick out the single road which crossed this area from Joinville to Brienne, but in his extremity he chanced to notice far below him a sort of dusky shaft moving along the deserted meadows.

It must have been a thrilling sight to the storm-tossed flier who only by this sign was able to verify his very dubious idea of where he was. He knew well enough that the shaft of brightness came from the headlight of a motorcycle and he believed that the rider, whoever he was, was hurrying to Paris, perhaps bearing the very news which he himself had dropped from his stolen plane.

And here is an instance thoroughly typical of Slade, who could reason calmly in wind and storm. "I knew if I was right," he said, "and it was what we always called the flats down there, and he was on the causeway road, why, pretty soon he'd get stuck and then he'd throw his light around to see where he was at and maybe it would show me a place to land."

So he flew lower than it was safe to fly when constant manouvering was necessary, for of course the strong westerly gale which he was facing would lose all its supporting effect instantly he took it in any quarter. Yet he must manouver in all this hubbub of earth-wind, for the cyclist was proceeding slowly and, as we know, with great difficulty.

It was just at the moment when Archer's headlight threw its dusky column across the meadows that Slade, alert and watchful, swooped down into the unincumbered area which the guiding light had shown him.

In the whole war I know of no episode concerning individuals which I think more dramatic than the meeting of these two. By all the rules of the story-telling game they should have "parted no more," but Slade, as I told you, was a sort

of stormy petrel, coming and going, and we can only hope to glimpse him on the wing. Even the immediate circumstances concerning his death are more or less of a mystery.

## CHAPTER V

### TOGETHER

"It was just like you; I knew you'd get stuck," were the consoling words which Slade uttered to Archer. "You should have gone by the Ridge road and you'd have been all right."

"Yes, and where would *you* have landed if it hadn't been forr me?" Archer very properly replied. "You'd have been tearrin' arround the sky and maybe got stranded on Marrs for all *I* know."

"Don't roll your R's so much," Slade replied. "Can't you say Mars?"

"It was good to see him again," Archer told me, "and hearr him talk in that funny, soberr way he had. He was always kidding me about R's."

Indeed, it would be hard to say who was the rescuer and who the rescued in this extraordinary business. I suppose it may be said that they rescued each other.

"What are we going to do now?" Archer asked. "I've got to get to Brienne if I can, or go all the way to Paris if I have to. They won't do a thing but wing us in Paris. I say, keep out of Paris."

Which was very good advice, first and last, and more than one boy in khaki had heard it.

"Do you know wherre we arre?" Archer asked.

"I know *about* where we are," Slade answered. "Throw your searchlight over there. See that kind of black——"

"Yes, I see it," Archer interrupted.

"I think that's the hills near Barsaby," * Tom replied. "Wait till I see what time it is. There'll be a train leaving there about eleven, going down to Chatillon. It whistles just before it goes in the tunnel. If I hear that I can tell about where we are."

"Maybe it can't run," Archer reminded him.

"It's got to run—that's a commissary centre," Slade said. "And it's right along the mountains anyway." He looked at his watch and saw that it was fifteen minutes of eleven.

"What do you mean to do?" Archer asked, a bit puzzled.

* Bar-sur-Aube.

"If I hear that whistle, I can tell just about where we are," Slade said. "If it sounds kind of dim south of here I'll know we're just about east of Troyes. I know we're east of Troyes but I can't tell if we're a little north or a little south of it. I'd rather use my ears than a compass a night like this. I can run her straight west all right, right into the wind, but if I've got to climb upstairs I want to know it."

Archer did not fully understand, nor indeed did I, except I infer that Slade intended to measure the almost exact distance to a certain place (Bar-sur-Aube) by the whistle of a locomotive and to lay his aerial course accordingly. I think that here was another instance of the value of his woods lore and scout training.

That he did this thing, Archer assures me. The rain was at last holding up and the gale subsiding into a brisk, steady wind out of the west, and they sat, these two, in the two seats of the plane, and chatted about old times, there in that desolate submerged meadow. And here is something that will please you.

"He was talking about Bridgeboro, wherre he used to live," said Archer, "and a fellerr he knew

therre that got him into the Boy Scouts a long time ago. Roy Blakeley was that fellerr's name." So you see that far away in the devastated, scourged land of France, your name was given to the same wind which was to bear these two adventurers to their destination. And so, chatting, they waited in the lonely darkness.

"The job will be getting her started," Slade said.

"How about landing?" Archer asked him.

"It'll be easier now I've got somebody with me. Got your dispatch book?"

Of course Archer had.

"Then go and get a spoke out of your wheel or maybe the timer-bar would be better. Get two or three spokes. You've got your clippers all right, haven't you? Go ahead. I'll tell you when you get back. Get some wire off your mudguard, too."

"There was only one way to do with Slady," Archer observes. "You had to do just what he said."

So he waded through the soggy field to where his motorcycle, half sunken in the mud which had been a road, stood "pokin' upwarrd," as he said, "like an old balky horrse." Its carbureter and gas tank must have been filled with mud by now and there was no hope of getting a kick out of it

even if he could have extricated it. With his nippers he clipped off several spokes and removed also the long nickel rod by which the timer was controlled at the handle bar. This was about three feet long. He took also the wire and his nippers.

Scarcely had he returned when they were both struck silent by the thin, spent sound of a locomotive whistle far in the distance.

"You're all right, Slady!" Archer exclaimed in admiration.

"It's comin' across the wind," said Slade. "We've got to allow for that." He screwed up his mouth sideways, Archer said, and looked for all the world like a "regularr old grandmotherr with his goggles up on his forrehead."

"It's all right," he said finally. "we're all right now if we can only get her out of here. These old Hun ice wagons weigh about a hundred tons. If we fly straight west we'll strike Troyes in half an hour. Even if we don't just strike it, we'll see the glare and that's all I care about. We can land in the school * just outside the town. They'll have the four lights on account of a patrol being

* He meant, of course, the big aviation school.

out, maybe. We'll have to take our chances with the patrol. We can fly square and there won't be any draft, that's one good thing."

I think you will see from his talk what he hoped to do. He knew that they were not far east of Troyes, the most considerable place between them and Paris. Here, undoubtedly, there would be communication with the metropolis. And he knew of a landing place there—the school with its corner lights. There were also anti-aircraft guns there, as he knew perfectly well, but he hoped to anticipate their shots. He knew he could fly directly west without much difficulty and that there was probably no place in this route with anti-aircraft equipment. So far, so good. If they could only get started. But was he a little north or south of Troyes or directly east of it? If he flew due west would he come within the guiding radius of its glare? A mile or so north or south of the town would make no difference, so far as seeing its composite glare was concerned, but then he would have to take the wind in one quarter or another and run across it. And that he wished to avoid. Indeed, he might have avoided it, by going above the current, out of the wind and into the clouds. But how could he see the four guiding lights then?

In a word he wished to fly due west and hit his destination as a bullet hits its mark. Perhaps if he had been an experienced airman he would not have felt it needful to do this, especially since the weather was quieter. Perhaps he was a little unnerved by his experience so far. Be that as it might, one thing he knew from his knowledge of the roads and the country, gleaned when he was serving as messenger. He knew that Troyes was thirty or forty miles west of the hill town of Bar-sur-Aube, but a trifle north of it—about five miles, he thought. *And he determined how far north he was from Bar-sur-Aube by the distant whistle of a locomotive.* And the sequel proved, as you shall see, that his ear was tuned to the fraction of a mile.

I understand that in considering Slade's rather irregular application for his brevet papers after this affair, it was submitted by an instructor lieutenant that he had accomplished his feat by a "trick of the scout rather than of the aviator." Did you ever hear such nonsense? Indeed, if that is so, then all I have to say is, *Three cheers for the Scouts!*

But to return. Slade and Archer made half a dozen or so "flaming arrows," as Archer called them, using the same idea that Slade had used

for his missives. The principal one of these was that in which they used the nickel time-bar and on this they exerted special inventive effort. Archer's shirt was wound into a tight wad so as to hold the flames longer, and was put to soak in the replenished can of gasolene. To one end of the rod was fastened a note written by Slade, but composed by both. This momentous and very characteristic missive Archer thinks he can yet procure by reason of his "being in soft" with certain high Signal Corps officials. If he succeeds I will certainly bring it home to you. In any case, this is what it said:

> Two Americans are up here in a Hun machine. Escaped in it from Azoudange prison. Have news and messages for transmission to Paris. Also Hun airman's roller-map kept from damage. We want to make a landing so don't shoot. If everything is all right give us plenty of lights and fire three shots. If any questions, fire shots in Morse Code. We'll answer by dropping more notes. But hurry. This is written on American messenger's dispatch blank. Also notice nickel rod is from distance type B American motorcycle.
>
> THOMAS SLADE,
> *Signal Corps Messenger Service.*
> ARCHIBALD ARCHER,
> *Signal Corps Messenger Service.*

Other smaller notes were prepared and "mounted" and it was agreed that it should be Archer's

duty to drop these conciliatory bombs one after another into the school field near Troyes. They had purposely refrained from mentioning that only one of them had escaped in the plane, for that would have necessitated mentioning their extraordinary meeting and might have aroused suspicion.

Having prepared these communications and manufactured their "bombs" by attaching rags from their clothing, they proceeded with what seemed the all but hopeless task of getting started. In this matter Archer's headlight proved invaluable. With its aid an exploration of the submerged field was made and they found that a short distance from where they were it sloped up and was quite clear of the water for an area of a few yards.

To the edge of this higher land they moved the machine, one at either end of the plane, and set it facing into the wind.

The rain had almost ceased now, but the sky was still thick with little flaky clouds. Archer climbed into his seat and Slade buckled him in, giving him part of the oilskin tarpaulin for such protection as it might afford him. A moment later they were off, gliding along the field until

presently, as Archer says, he saw the smooth black water of the meadows beneath him and knew that they were gathering height.

"He kept one hand on a leverr," said Archer, "and watched the compass by the light of the little electric bulb near it. I saw we werre heading straight west, but I couldn't talk on account of the noise. I knew we werre going higherr and higherr, and it scarred me, kind of, that everything was darrk all around."

But there was a little bright spot near the compass and the pilot had his eye fixed on that. Archer said he watched the altimétre and felt "nerrvous, sorrt of," as the plane climbed higher and higher into the black heavens.

## CHAPTER VI

### UP IN THE AIR

THE plane was running like a dream at an altitude of 1,800 feet and due west when they became aware of two tiny lights far below them. Not a glimmer was there anywhere near them and if Troyes were down there it was cautious enough to keep itself in the dark. Archer says that Slade did not speak to him nor even answer when he spoke, and he could only surmise what the pilot was about. He saw the altimétre register lower and presently he saw another light, the three forming a triangle. Slade said something about their being within gun fire range, but Archer could not hear him clearly and instinctively he kept still.

"I think it's it," he finally heard Slade say.

Archer did not fully understand why Slade thought it was "it." He confesses that he was

"nerrvous and flusterred" and did not dare to ask questions.

"Get your stuff ready," he heard Slade say. "Do you see another light? There must be a patrol out—that's lucky."

As we know, Troyes was one of the places which Slade had often visited upon his official errands, and there he had once or twice met Archer. So we may assume that he knew something of the neighboring aviation school and field with its guiding corner lights. If there had been no patrol out these lights would not have been burning. At a second's notice any one or all of them could be turned into a giant finger to probe the heavens, and Slade knew this.

In retelling, as well as I can, from Archer's fragmentary narrative, the tale of their heroic fight, I wish not to minimize the element of luck, nor, upon the other hand, to draw upon my imagination. If I had Slade's story I could write from the standpoint of the pilot, but as it is I am writing from the standpoint of his anxious companion who did his little part, kept discreetly silent and waited in suspense.

That Slade should have flown due west upon the strength of an original calculation and come di-

rectly over this place was remarkable and greatly to his credit. But he was mistaken in supposing that there would be a glare from the lights of the town and it was a piece of sheer luck that the corner lights of the big field were burning, for the night was not propitious for patrols.

Archer had just spied a fourth light, completing a square, and was dipping his tightly wound shirt into the gasolene, when a long, dusky column moved across the darkness, hesitated, groped, moved toward them, then away again, and then—there they were in a field of brightness and he saw Slade as he had not seen him in nearly a year.

"He looked olderr and his big mouth was shut tight as if he was mad, but I could see how his two hands that held the controls were steady, just like that (he gripped one of the bars of the bed to show me), and I could even see the ring on his fingerr just as plain as day."

A shot rang out and the plane shook "just like a dog shakes himself." He saw Slade yank back the larger lever and reach below him for another. For a few seconds he was pushing and pulling—the terrible shaking ceased—darkness.

Archer was trembling like a leaf.

"A miss is as good as a mile," he heard Slade say. "Don't get rattled, she's stable, drop your note, quick! I'm going to get out of this!"

It seemed to Archer but half a second and then the four lights were far away, so quickly is distance multiplied by the slightest movement in the air. It seemed now that the square was all askew and the odd fancy occurred to him that the shock of that gun away down there had knocked it out of shape.

"See it?" he heard Slade say without any trace of excitement.

Archer looked and saw far below them and some distance to the west the little flickering light of the descending torch, growing smaller—smaller—until it disappeared. He tried to determine whether it was within the radius of the square but that was quite impossible, for the square kept changing, and as a sort of vent to his suspense he watched it, expecting every second to find himself in another glare of light, and then to go tumbling down through space. Now those far-off lights formed a diamond, now they seemed to form almost a straight line, then opened into a crazy sort of square and again looked like a part of the Big Dipper; and the whimsical thought

came to Archer that they were above the stars and looking down on them.

He knew, of course, that these odd effects were caused by Slade's manouvering, but he had never seen such effects produced while riding on an express train or any other sort of conveyance, and the experience fascinated him much more than did the very simple and obvious devices for controlling their craft. "I felt as if I didn't belong to the worrld at all," he said.

He does not know how long they manouvered, nor how much area they covered in doing so, because there is hardly such a thing as distance in an airplane. An aviator may go five miles to turn around. "All I know is," he said, "that pretty soon I saw something down therre, but not just below me, just like a picture comes on the movie screen when the audience is all in the darrk. I saw the buildings and everything and long lines, white kind of, like a baseball field, only the buildings were all built slantingways, like, as if the wind that was blowin' a little while before had kind of pushed them over one way. *Believe me,* I've sat up in the top galleries at a good many movie shows, but I neverr, neverr, neverr saw such a big, clearr screen. . . 'Slady,'

I shouted, 'look at those buildings, will you, how they'rre all fallen overr sideways—' 'I don't know which one of us is a bigger fool,' Slady answered, pulling on the stick that moves the sideways thing in back and grabbin' the otherr one that he called the broomstick. 'Look at 'em, will you!' I shouted. 'They'rre built crazy, or something!' '*You're* built crazy or something,' Slady said, 'look at 'em now.' And just then they straightened all up like regular buildings, long barrns, sorrt of, and the white lines made a big square, all nice and even like. 'I swept 'em straight with the broomstick,' Slady says, in that soberr way of his, and just then the whole place tipped up like as if it was going to spill all the buildings off it and everything was all crooked again. 'Have a hearrt, Slady!' I shouted. 'You'll spill the whole concarrned village if you pull that thing again!' "

"Did Slade laugh?" I asked.

"No, he didn't. He just said he was a fool to tell them to fire three shots when he might have known that if they believed the message they'd just illuminate the field. 'Maybe they'll fire 'em anyway,' he said. 'I hope they don't fire 'em up herre,' I told him. He didn't pay any

attention to me, only kept scowlin' like he always did when he was especially interested and kept his hands and feet both busy.

"Pretty soon therre were three shots and I guess they knew down therre that everything was all right because when we asked for three shots, that showed we were greenhorns, all right. But they gave 'em anyway. 'What'll I do now?' I said to Slady, for I was feeling mighty glad that we'd got there and that everything was all right. 'Don't do anything except shut up,' he says, so I just watched him like mamma's good little boy while he pulled and pushed and I could see from the altimétrrre that we werre going down.

"We werren't over the bright field at all then —he'd got way overr to the west of it or the south of it—I don't know—and the whole business was up slanting ways again—way up. Then all of a sudden the long buildings began to straighten out and be theirr right shapes again almost, and then just like that (he clapped his hands with a resounding smack by way of illustration) therre they werre away overr at the otherr end of the great big field standing as straight as soldierrs and as squarre as a choppin'-block, and us coming straight towarrds them, and there was a company

of Frenchies all lined up waitin', maybe on account of its seemin' sorrt of like a *kamarad* game, and there was fellerrs running out of those long buildings pell-mell towarrds us and it was a regularr kind of a cirrcus. I guess we hit terra-cotta * too near the buildings maybe, but anyway it was all right. A lieutenant climbed up and took a squint at us and says, 'Good shot,' and then there was a crowd all around us—fellerrs that had been asleep, I guess, and a lot morre. The firrst thing *I* did when I got a chance I went overr and took a look at those long barrns—dorrmitories, they were, and I said to a sarrgeant that was therre, gaping all overr his face, I says, 'I want to make surre these things ain't built like accordions, 'cause, *believe me,* you can twist 'em every which way when you'rre up in the airrrr!' "

"See if you can't say air," I said, smiling as he sat back in his wheel chair, quite exhausted.

"Airrrrre," he repeated.

"Good!" I laughed.

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* If he heard any such word as this used, it was probably *terra firma.*

## CHAPTER VII

### CHANGING SCENES

I have told you of the last part of this astonishing flight in Archer's own words, as well as I could transcribe them from my shorthand notes, because I think it gives a very good idea of his own impressions. How Tom Slade felt throughout that exciting night I can only conjecture. You knew him and I did not. Imperturbable, resourceful, strong-willed, a little dash of grim humor (at least, in his relations with the irrepressible Archer), and with the spirit of adventure born in him, I can form some sort of picture of him in my own mind—the scowl, the big mouth, the towhead—but at best he is something of a mystery to me. I can fancy him on that wild night, one hand upon his stabilizing control, the other on the handle by which he communicated his dogged will to the rudders, a keen eye always fixed upon his altimétre or his compass. Sometimes I fancy

that I can hear that "soberr, kind of" voice of his. But as I say, you knew him and I did not.

I must now tell you of the practical results of his deed. You know already of the movements which followed immediately upon the discovery of his warning messages, and if you have read the papers I suppose you know of the iron wall which the Germans found confronting them. Archer's messages were opened and read and such parts of them as required transmission were wired on to General Pershing, who was then in Paris.

But these, important though they were, are not a part of my story. You will recall that when the souvenir-loving Archer first inspected the Hun plane in quest of booty, his longing fingers lingered upon something which looked like a shade roller, hung before the pilot's seat and which Slade had wound in oilskin. It was typical of Slade that he should have thought to do this even in the excitement of his escape, and this little act of foresightedness and caution was destined to have far-reaching and memorable consequences in which he was to be involved.

They spent the balance of the night in the barracks of this aviation centre and, according to

Archer, were treated royally by the student airmen, who, I suspect, found him an amusing youngster for several of them gave him a sentence to say which he repeated to their great delight. It ran something like this: *Roaring, raging, rampant, rambunctious rhinoceroses ran round rugged rocks, recklessly raising ridiculous reverberating rows.* If he repeated it to them as he did to me, it must have been very entertaining. He also sang them "Peterr Porkerr's Pig," a ballad of the Catskills, I suppose, which won him great applause. He says the airmen slept in the long dormitories, in rows on either side, and that it was just like camping to be among them. In the morning he and Slade watched some ground flights, made by beginners in machines with "clipped wings," which could not leave the ground. They wriggled around this way and that, he said, and were very funny—like a "barrnyarrd full of chickens." Several new men came in from their brevet, cross-country flights during the morning and were loudly acclaimed, he said. It was fun to see them chase each other round the field.

That afternoon Archer went into Troyes to have a new cycle issued to him, and said goodbye to the comrade whom he was destined never

to see again. Slade, he said, was to remain there for another day while the instructor (Lieutenant Tanner) endeavored to have him transferred from the messenger corps into this branch of the service. He thought it would not be difficult in the circumstances, and surely it ought not to have been.

And thus Archibald Archer passes out of the story. He remained my cot neighbor here in the hospital until the day before yesterday, when he was discharged as cured. He knew nothing of Slade after their parting at the aviation school and it was not until he became a patient in the hospital and saw the mended place in the roof that he learned of his former comrade's having been there before him and of how the stolid partner of their great exploit had later gone to his last adventure high among the clouds. But of the intimate circumstances of this he knew nothing.

You will think it rather a coincidence that all three of us should have been patients in this same hospital, but such things are not unusual here in France. I could tell you of four brothers who met in one of the big hospitals in Paris, and of a father and son who met on sentry duty when

one supposed the other to be in Mexico—such a kaleidoscope is this great war.

I began by being merely amused at Archibald Archer but I came to be greatly interested in him and to like him immensely. He is the kind of young fellow who is putting pep into this war, and I never dreamed until after he went away how keenly we should miss him. Even the "cross red nurses," as he called them, who frequently had occasion to chide him, wish that he would be brought back with a *slight* wound. I shall never forget his souvenirs and his apple-eating and the good old up-country roll of his R's. If his luck doesn't change (and I don't think it will ever change) and he gets home safely, I mean to hunt him up on his farm in the Catskills and hear him sing "Peterrr Porrkerr's Pig" once again. If all goes well, I promise you a meeting with him and you can put him into one of your famous stories if you wish to. It has been pretty lonesome here these last two days, and I thank goodness that I am leaving the hospital myself on Friday.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE OTHER GUN

I AM writing this in Paris where I came to rest after seeing the boys straighten out the last wrinkle in the old Marne salient. It's almost like a tight-rope now—a bee line from Rheims right through the woods north of Campiegne.

The doctors sent me back because of my cough; the after effect, they say, of being gassed. I am told that if this troublesome cough does not presently subside it will be desirable for me to seek another climate—the mountains of Switzerland, for instance. I am hoping that this will not be necessary and meanwhile I shall continue my tale of Tom Slade. For I have dug up one or two more things for you out of his checkered career.

Each morning I come out and sit on the Boulevard, and do my writing in the intervals of watching the sights. The benches are filled with crippled soldiers and there is a little French girl who

comes along nearly every day and gives us each a flower. Nannette, her name is, and she is the only one left of a family of nine who were kidnapped and butchered by the Germans in Senlis. She wears wooden shoes and I listen for their clatter each morning. Directly across from my favorite seat is the wreck of a house which was bombed, and the soldiers are always picking up odds and ends to take home. It brings back fond memories of Archibald Archer.

Well, when I left the hospital at Epernay I had two things, and one was this cough. The other was the name of Lieutenant Tanner, of the flying field near Troyes. It seemed that here was the likeliest means of finding out something of Slade's subsequent career, so I visited the place on a pass and talked with the lieutenant. I found him agreeable enough but rather brief. I suspect that he does not greatly admire us "knights of the fountain pen." He told me, among other things, that Slade's landing had been "amateurish" but quite remarkable. He said that Slade took a "low angle grade" or something of that sort, for to tell you the truth, I don't know what he was talking about.

They were putting the men through their train-

ing in pretty rapid order then in anticipation of the final scene, and physical fitness and natural aptitude and daring once established, the rest was easy. Slade received a rather perfunctory training at this place, made an altogether successful brevet flight (his real test was the flight I've told you of), and was transferred to the airdrome near Chalons on the Marne, where he was kept at the noncombatant work of aerial messenger. If he had any interesting experiences in this branch of the service I have not been able to learn them, but of the remarkable incident which resulted in his being taken to the hospital at Epernay I have authentic information, and of this I shall now tell you.

I have been at some pains to learn the full story of this singular business and my information is derived from several sources. I will mention these now so that the story, as I tell it, may not be cumbered with continual reference to my authorities.

First, there is Captain Whitloss of the airdrome near Chalons, who was Slade's superior and whom I cannot sufficiently thank for his hospitality and courtesy to a mere fountain pen warrior! Next, there is an old Frenchman of the name of Gode-

froi Grigou and his daughter, Jeanne, aged seventeen, who at the time this thing happened lived in the village of Talois, some fifteen miles beyond the German line as it ran then. In the spreading of the advance which began with General Foch's counter offensive on the Marne, this village was brought within the allied lines and I have visited it (or what there is left of it) and talked with old Godefroi and his daughter.

The girl speaks English with a pretty, broken accent, having learned it, so she told me, from an American who was in the German service. I think he must have been a German-American, for he spoke German also. The only name they knew him by was Captain Toby. He was in the German aerial observation corps, and was for some time prior to the events which I am going to record, domiciled in the simple home of these poor people, who were forced to share their meagre fare with him and pay him homage. I have never seen this creature, but I understand that he has many black marks against his name, and that it will fare ill with him if he ever falls into allied hands.

I think there were never two happier people than old Godefroi and his young daughter since

their delivery from German arrogance and oppression. Their poor little thatched cottage is now ten miles within General Foch's iron line, and here I spent one of the pleasantest afternoons I have known since I came to France.

From these three persons, then, I learned the substance of the story which I am about to tell and which I shall call *The Episode of the Other Gun*. Even the conversations are substantially authentic and if I have filled up the gaps here and there with a little of the story-teller's material, I think I can assure you that I have held a tight rein upon my imagination, and have not introduced any matter save what is obviously suggested by the facts.

One afternoon, as Slade alighted after a flight to Neufchateau he was instructed to report to the captain's headquarters where he found two officers connected with the secret information service. Having made certain that he was the right Thomas Slade, they asked him whether he had heard of the great advantage to the allies which had accrued from a study of the roller map of the Hun plane in which he had escaped.

"I never heard anything more about it," said Slade.

They told him that matters of the greatest importance had been revealed by this map, such as the location of airdromes and ammunition dumps, official headquarters, etc., and, most important of all, the positions, or rather the neighborhood, of two isolated pieces of mammoth artillery which had been pounding away at Chalons near by. One of these, they said, had been located near Tagnoni and put out of business. The other was still active and creating frightful havoc in Chalons and neighboring places. Its locality was marked by a cross upon the German airman's map and a reproduction of this section of the map was shown to Slade. It showed Talois in the hilly country about twelve or fifteen miles behind the enemy lines.

"It has been decided," said one of the officers, "to send a flier to this place in the plane which you brought from Azoudange, to reconnoiter and report, if possible, the precise location of this piece. Specific instructions are ready and if you care to volunteer for this service your offer will be considered. You speak German, I believe?"

"Kind of," said Slade.

"You were in the German camp how long?"

"About a month."

"You come of German people?"

"No, I don't," said Slade, "but if I did it wouldn't be my fault."

The officer looked at him with a sort of careful scrutiny from which I infer (and so does Captain Whitloss) that they thought he had somewhat the appearance of a German and were glad of it. They explained that individuals were not detailed for such hazardous expeditions except upon their volunteering; that they gave him this opportunity because he had brought the Hun plane into allied territory, because he had been among Germans during his captivity, and because he spoke German. They said nothing about his personal bravery, for they do not do this in the army.

"Do I just have to say I volunteer?" said Slade.

"If you wish to go."

"Then I say it."

"Very well; your instructions will be delivered to you by Captain Whitloss tomorrow and you will be held at the field until then."

Slade saluted and left the room. Throughout the balance of that day he showed not the slightest ruffle in his stolid demeanor and in the morning he wandered about the field watching the practice of his comrades. Once only did he speak to any-

one and that was to ask Captain Whitloss if this errand was in the nature of a spy's work.

"That's how they'll treat you if they find you out," said the captain.

"I don't mean over there," said Slade. "I'm not thinking about that; but over here."

"Well, not exactly," said the captain, which seemed to satisfy him.

In the early afternoon the Hun plane, which must have recalled vivid memories to Slade, circled over the field and made a landing. Its pilot, one of the aviators from the neighborhood of Troyes, brought Slade's instructions, which I have been permitted to see. I think I may reproduce them here, particularly as the episode is now a thing of the past and moreover you will not see this until I return to America.

> The messenger will commit these instructions to memory and, having repeated them accurately to his commanding officer, will sign and return them to such officer. He will then hold himself in readiness for further orders.
>
> Upon receiving these he shall, at a time to be designated, fly to Suippes where materials and final orders will be given him.
>
> Upon his final orders for departure he shall proceed as follows: Fly directly northward from Suippes, under safe conduct, and cross the lines at St. Estey. From this point he shall follow the

line of the road which runs directly northward to Vouziers. Both road and town, it is believed, are sufficiently indicated in low flight.

From Vouziers he shall follow the line of road running eastward into the hills. Village of Talois is first village eastward on this road. Continuing directly eastward over wooded hill he shall locate whitewashed, thatched-roof cottage on road at edge of woods and make landing in field adjacent. Inquire at cottage for M. Grigou and present credentials. If hospitality is refused he shall return forthwith to Suippes. Otherwise, he shall remain and spend following day in exploration of east slope of wooded hill west of cottage. Spend day following in exploration of west slope. Spend second day following in such further explorations as previous explorations indicate. If gun is located, he shall note its position with regard to slope, neighboring contours and such landmarks and geographic facts as may reduce the area of its approximate position from Allied lines. On the night of third day he shall positively return to base at Chalons.

Subjoined to this order was a list of items which might be more or less helpful in locating his destination, and so forth.

Notwithstanding the very explicit character of these instructions, it is plain that they left much to the flier's judgment and resource. I suspect that Slade's superiors were in possession of secret information which they did not think it necessary to give the volunteer, but which might have afforded him some reassurance in so hazardous

a trip. For one thing, I understand it was known at the time that the news of the ridiculous loss of the Hun machine had been suppressed within the enemy lines. Whether this was the work of the authorities of the prison camp in collusion with the German flier, I do not know, but enemy prisoners (even officers) taken by the French and Americans professed complete ignorance of this inglorious loss of one of their machines. Perhaps it was this that determined the use of the Hun plane in this delicate business.

Captain Whitloss says that Slade repeated his instructions word for word in a "kind of dull, monotonous tone" correcting himself even in the most trifling details, then signed the formidable documents in a scrawling hand. I saw this signature. It was written in a firm, but very careless, hand and read simply Tom Slade. After that he played checkers until three in the afternoon when, upon verbal orders, he left the airdrome. (Orders regarding time of departure are seldom known in advance.)

Alighting in Suippes, he was outfitted with the shabby garment of a German flier—remnant, I suppose, of some hapless enemy captive. He showed no surprise to find here that his "creden-

tials" consisted merely of a tarnished brass button. "Will I give him this?" was all he said.

Suippes is (or was) just a couple of miles behind the line and here Slade remained through the early part of the evening, pitching ball until it was too dark and then watching the boys playing cards in the Y. M. C. A. hut. A little after ten o'clock he was ordered out upon his perilous errand.

Of the flight itself I know nothing, for I never saw Slade, and he was never thereafter able to make a satisfactory report. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

The night was crisp and clear with a strong breeze blowing out of the north, and the sky thick with stars. It was the same night that Aiken fell to his death from a height of nearly 3,000 feet and the descent of his machine, I am told, was plainly seen. So the conditions attending Slade's departure were propitious for his purpose. Indeed, if they had not been so his start would have been deferred, I suppose. At 10.25 he was reported passing over St. Estey, flying low, his propeller making that distinctive intermittent whir which is characteristic of German aircraft. St. Estey is right in the "front of the front," just within the

first line trenches. It is told that a group of German prisoners there at the time rejoiced that one of their fliers was getting back home safely and that one of them raised his hand toward the plane and called, "Prosit!"

So Tom Slade went forth upon his dangerous business with the best of good wishes on the part of his enemies!

## CHAPTER IX

### MONSIEUR LE CAPITAINE

It lacked a half-hour of midnight when old Grigou hobbled out of his doorway and looked up into the clear, star-studded night. There was no other house in sight, only the shell-torn fields to the east, and to the west the dark, wooded hill frowning upon the poor, isolated abode. Even Talois was over the hill and Mademoiselle Jeanne was afraid to go there because there were dead men to be seen along the lone path through the woods and swaggering, leering Prussians in the village. One dead man in particular she was afraid of because he sat up against a tree near the path and was always grinning at her.

But the person whom she feared the most of all was Monsieur le Capitaine. She did not know much about Monsieur le Capitaine excepting that he had come from far-off America to help the Fatherland. And the chief way in which he helped

the Fatherland seemed to be by sprawling in their little house and eating their food and ordering them about. She wondered why anyone should have come all the way from America to help the Fatherland.

He was very efficient and very mysterious, was Monsieur le Capitaine. Sometimes he came in "ze flying machine," sometimes on his feet. Once a small dirigible had landed in the shell-torn field and taken him away. He used often to go to Rheims and be gone for a week or more. Once Jeanne had flared up and denounced him and his friends for wrecking Rheims Cathedral and he had told her that this was nothing; that in America the people made a practice of destroying the cathedrals of the Indians. He told her that England was to blame for everything and that she ought to be glad that some brave men from America were helping poor, lonely, downtrodden Germany to thrash England. He told her that in America the national pastime was hanging black men and that all the lamp-posts in New York had black men hanging from them. Jeanne had shuddered at that.

Whatever in the world Monsieur le Capitaine was about, he was very much engrossed in it.

Neither Jeanne nor her poor old father had ever dared to ask him why he found their remote home so desirable. Perhaps that was the reason—its remoteness. About all that Jeanne really knew was that Monsieur le Capitaine knew all about "ze ships, when zey will go," and that he had something to do with a balloon with two black crosses on it. She had always inferred that these two black crosses were a mark of special honor or distinction. Chiefly she wished, for her poor old father's sake, that he would not drink their precious wine. If he would only let the wine alone, he could have ten black crosses for all she cared. . .

So you will readily appreciate the feelings with which Jeanne heard her father calling to her from outside the house.

"Jeanne! Jeanne! Monsieur le Capitaine est retourne!"

Jeanne emerged with a look of inquiring disappointment upon her troubled face and sure enough, there was the whir, whir, whir, whir overhead and a dark object circling against the darker background of sky.

"What matter, papa," she said resignedly in French; "for sometime he must come. So, maybe,

he will soon go. So? We shall think of his going, never of his coming. So, papa?"

Her father put his arm about her. "This is my brave little daughter," he said. "But come, he will wish wine."

The girl did not stir, however, but remained there with her father's arm about her, wistfully following the dark object with her eyes. Now it went far away and disappeared, now came back again. Now it came very low, now ascended. Now it was directly overhead, then of a sudden it was coming straight toward them, silently and very low, as if it must be another machine altogether. . .

Out of it climbed Tom Slade of the Flying Corps, and shaking down his heavy garments as he walked he approached the two, his goggles up on his forehead like a prosy old schoolmaster.

"I zink it ees ze capitaine," said the girl uncertainly.

"I ain't even a lieutenant," said Tom Slade. "Is this Mr. Grigou?"

Upon the old man's acknowledgement he presented his trinket of a credential, that talisman which has won food and shelter for many a sore beset fugitive, in the humble, devastated homes

of northern France—a button from the uniform of a French soldier in the old Franco-Prussian war. No compromising note of introduction, bringing possible peril to its holder, could have been so instrumental as this little memento, speaking the language of hallowed sentiment. Your Uncle Samuel knows the value of these little buttons.

I must not linger upon Slade's personal intercourse with these people. I believe that the information service knew something of conditions there and knew that "Monsieur le Capitaine" was temporarily absent. It would seem to explain the very explicit instructions for Slade's prompt return. I fancy I can detect another hand in this whole business and I think that Slade was merely the active figure in the enterprise. In any case, it was pretty close work, as they say. I am certain that M. Grigou did not expect Slade. The ways of the information service are dark and mysterious. . .

Slade was welcomed by this sturdy old Frenchman and his daughter and partook of a late supper with them, the while he spoke of his errand. He had made no attempt, of course, to hide his plane and Jeanne said that he appeared not the

least disconcerted at the possibility of the captain's returning unexpectedly, which, however, she thought unlikely. They knew he had gone to Berlin and he had said he would not return for a couple of weeks or more.

Yet for all that, and making full allowance for the possibility of the information service knowing of this mysterious person's whereabouts and the duration of his absence, there is something very striking to me in Slade's sitting there, his airplane outside, chatting with these people with apparently no more concern than if he had looked in for a social call. Perhaps he was safer than he knew.

"But he does not have ze—caire," said Jeanne, throwing out her hands with a fine suggestion of recklessness. "You see? So. He say if one man come, why he should caire! Oi, la, la, I say to him!"

A very singular thing occurred that night.

Naturally enough, they fell to speaking of the absent captain and in the course of their conversation Jeanne asked Slade if it were true that negroes were hanging from all the lamp posts of New York and if it were true that the American people were really for Germany, but that Presi-

dent Wilson sided with England and so made them fight against the Fatherland.

Slade told her that these were all lies and that he would like to come face to face with the man, whether German or German-American, who uttered such nonsense.

"He say ziss is all—how you say—nonsense," Jeanne told me. "He will not be mad, because ziss is nonsense. So. I tell him all zese sings—only he laugh. Lies—nonsense—and he laugh."

Apparently he had rallied her for believing all this extravagant stuff from the curious German mind. "He tell me I am so much at ease—ziss is why I believe." I suppose he told her that she was *easy*. He told her also that he would bring her some elephants and tigers from the neighboring woods next day and so the talk passed off in pleasant banter.

What, then, was the surprise of both Jeanne and her father when, on showing their visitor to the little room upstairs which he was to occupy, he strode over to the old chest of drawers which stood in a corner and taking up a photograph of a man in a sumptuous German uniform, demanded to know if that was the captain.

"I tell him yess," said the girl, "and how he

make me take ze picture. Ziss I do not like to have, but I am so afraid, I must take eet. So I put it here—you see? Maybe he ask."

Slade, according to her, took the picture, looked at it with an expression of rage, tore it into pieces and threw it on the floor. "So he talk low, too, and say mooch—vere rude," she said.

To put the whole thing in a few plain words, he was evidently siezed with ungovernable rage, declared he would kill the man upon sight for a lying, sneaking wretch and hoped that he might meet him there and have done with it. The girl was greatly surprised and very much frightened, and her father also when she translated Slade's talk for him. Her imperfect English was not always clear to me, but I gathered that Slade's outburst was such as to shock her and it presented him in a new light to me. No doubt, these poor people had been thoroughly cowed by the Germans and feared the consequence of any harm which might befall their arrogant tyrant of the two black crosses.

"He'll have a black cross over his grave if I ever see him!" Slade had muttered when he heard of this evident badge of honor.

"Even when we leave him," Jeanne told me,

"he sit on ze side of ze bed and look—so hard and his mouth—big—eet ees shut like ziss." And she compressed her pretty lips with a very feeble look of grim and murderous wrath. Thus they left him, a stranger in the enemy country, with perils all about him, for the little rest which he might get before his dangerous business of the morrow.

Now this episode struck me as being very peculiar. In the first place, I have it from Archer that Slade was of an imperturbable, stolid nature, and not given to fits of temper. Also, on hearing of the captain downstairs he had laughed at the girl for believing the stories the German had told her, and treated the mysterious tyrant's talk like the trash it was. Why, then, should he have flown into such a fury when he saw the picture?

I thought a good deal about it after I left old Grigou's cottage and the explanation that I hit on was this: that Slade rather liked the girl and was angry to think of her having this German's picture. Then I thought of what Archer had said about Slade's not having any use for "girrls." Well, at least, I thought, Slade was rather erratic. Perhaps it was only a trifling matter, but it puzzled me and it puzzles me still

No matter.

There is a little oasis of scouting and woodcraft in this bloody desert of war which will show you Tom Slade in a familiar light—as you used to know him at your beloved Temple Camp. And when you think of your dead comrade of the good old days I am sure you will wish to think of him as he trod the forest depths next day in quest of the iron murderer that lay concealed there.

I mean to recount this to you now.

# CHAPTER X

## THE SOUVENIR OF SOUVENIRS

If Slade had any suspicion that "Monsieur le Capitaine" was directly interested in the great gun which was concealed thereabout, he did not say so to old Grigou and his daughter. They, at least, knew nothing of any such gun in their neighborhood, but they told him of frightful explosions which made their cottage "shiver." They seemed to think that such things were common along the entire front and they knew of houses which had been shaken down by distant explosions. Slade asked them if they had heard any of these explosions lately and they told him they had not—not for several days. "Only he shake his head—vere wise—so," Jeanne volunteered.

He said afterward that he had counted on the noise of the monster to guide him to it but that he supposed his visit was in an interval of disuse caused by the ever-increasing scarcity of ammunition.

Early in the morning he set forth with a little snack which Jeanne had prepared for him and following the woods path was soon lost in the hilly forest. I have myself seen this forest at its edge and how any human being could hope to locate a particular object in it is beyond my comprehension. The woods path which ends near Grigou's cottage follows a meandering course over the densely wooded summit and winding down the western slope develops into the single street of Talois village. I should say it might be five miles over the hill as the crow flies and more than ten by the path.

It was long after dark when Slade returned, very weary and apparently discouraged. He had seen nothing but dead men in the woods, he said. Not a sign was there of any open way along which artillery might be hauled—not so much as a wagon track. He was in a very ill mood and Jeanne tried to console him by saying that as long as he tried it was not disgrace if he failed.

"Sure it's a disgrace if you fail," he answered in a surly tone.

"I tell him ziss is no—what you call—dees-grace."

Then he made one of those puzzling observa-

tions of his—the kind which Archer was always quoting.

"You can't disgrace yourself either without disgracing a lot of other people. If you could it wouldn't be so bad. That's why I wouldn't want the place where I live disgraced—or the whole air service, either."

Jeanne apparently did not appreciate this line of reasoning and probably thought Slade rather a queer fellow.

The next morning at daylight he set forth again and returned long after dark, dog tired. He had wandered over the west slope of the hill down as far as the village where he had talked with Germans, making his inquiries as plain as he dared. The sum total of the information he had gained was just nothing at all and he returned with the gloomy realization of the needle-in-the-haystack character of his quest. I suspect that Slade was not a good loser—perhaps because he was not accustomed to losing.

"I got one more day," he said doggedly.

The next day he carried his explorations whither his fancy took him and hoped for luck. This hill, so called, is in reality a sort of jumble of hill. Deep gullies intervened to balk the traveller and

the undergrowth and secondary slopes, if I may so call them, make an orderly exploration quite impossible. I do not see how it could have been otherwise. That he should stumble upon a piece of artillery in all that litter of wilderness would have been sheer luck. What he sought was a road of communication between this unknown monster and the village. But there was no road. He returned a little after dark in great dejection.

"He will not spik to me," said the girl. "I tell him *so*—they are crazee—how you say—to send him. He will not even spik to me—or drink ze wine."

Slade was always punctilious in obeying orders; he had the dogged, mechanical submission of a German in that regard. He went out in the field, hauled the plane about, tied a strip of surgical bandage, which he always carried, to the end of a stick, and held it up to note the direction of the wind.

It was at that moment that the cheerful, sympathetic French girl, seeing his dejection, uttered the simple words which were to have such momentous consequences.

"See—wait—I will gif' you ze souvenir—so you remember."

I do not know whether Slade's mood permitted him a smile in memory of Archibald Archer at the mention of that familiar word. But I do know that he answered (rather rudely, I am afraid) that he didn't want any souvenir.

I like to think how great things are sometimes brought about by the turn of a hair—how Columbus, for instance, all but turned back in the fateful moment when land was sighted. And I pay my tribute here to that frail, brave, cheerful little maid in devastated France, who all unknowingly muzzled that big gun forever. And here's to the Boy Scouts of America too and all their precious lore of woodcraft.

In another five seconds Tom Slade would have been flying southward, defeated, chagrined, ashamed. But Jeanne came running out in her pretty, cheery way and handed him a charred splinter of wood.

"You know how I tell you ze house it shake when ziss beeg noise—here—you see? Ziss come zen out of ze sky where you fly up. You take ziss to Americ' for souvenir—you see? Vive l'Amerique!"

Tom Slade held this splintered fragment down by the tiny bulb which illumined his compass.

"It flew here, you mean?"

"Out of ze sky—so."

There was a moment's pause, she told me—a fateful moment.

"I never knew that grew here; it's swamp larch." He smelled of it and scratched it with his fingers. "Hmmm." It was charred and left his fingers black and sticky. "Hmmm," he said again, "it's swamp larch all right—resin just like cedar —hmmm." He held it close under the little light and examined it more carefully. He turned it this way and that. He scraped off some of the charred, pungent resin, and sniffed it. He bit a splinter off and chewed it a little. "Hmm."

She was pleased at his interest and said something which I think was very pretty. "Now you will forgive me about ze picture?"

Tom Slade, of the Flying Corps, turned off the tiny light, shut off his gas, and climbed down from his seat. It was the airman who climbed into that machine. It was the scout who got out of it.

"I know where the gun is now," he said simply. "A minute ago you said, 'Vive l'Amerique!' Now *I* say, "Vive la France!' 'Vive Jeanne!'"

I am glad that at least he had the gallantry to say that.

## CHAPTER XI

### AIRMAN AND SCOUT

SLADE made his report of this business while lying in the Epernay Hospital. This I have not seen, but Captain Whitloss has told me of it. By reason of the character of Slade's mission, neither he nor anyone else talked of it and even the surgeons and nurses knew nothing of his late exploit, more than that he had sustained a serious injury while flying.

"As soon as I saw that piece of wood," he told the captain, "I knew it was swamp larch. That always grows near water and usually high up. I thought it must have been right close to the gun, in front of it, because it caught some of the fire. I could even smell the powder. I thought maybe it was a part of the camouflaging in front. Anyway it was torn off a limb, anyone could see that, and was near enough to get burned. In scouting they always tell things by signs. She picked it

up when it fell off the thatch roof and they had to chuck a couple of buckets of water up there because the thatch was starting. She couldn't pick it up at first, it was so hot.

"I knew there wasn't any larch at all where I'd been 'cause if there had been I'd have seen it—wouldn't I?"

The captain said he supposed so.

"There was only one thing to do and that was to start with the brook and follow it up. I had to start back that night under signed orders so there wasn't much time. I knew if there were any swamp larches I'd find them that way—see? And then I'd find out how a chunk like that could get torn off and all charred, and be blown two or three miles maybe. I knew what to do then 'cause I had something to go by. That's a scout sign, kind of."

He certainly made good use of his scout sign. In less than two minutes, they tell me, he had picked up his trail at the little trickle of a spring whence they got their drinking water. It came down between rocks, a mere dribble of water, as if from a leaky faucet. I saw this, what there was to it, and how he managed to trace it through all its intricate windings, I am sure I do not know.

I tried to follow it up myself and got just fifteen feet by a tape measure when it ran under a flat rock.

This trickle led him, as he thought it would, to the brook from which it branched off. He had crossed this during the day, but, of course, had not followed it, for there had been no reason to do so. It led him for about three miles through a densely wooded section where he kept a continual watch for larches and cedars. But there were none to be seen and no point of elevation commanding a prospect to the south.

He at last reached a place where the brook ran far below him between rocks and he followed its course through this ravine with great difficulty until he came to a point where it appeared to emerge out of a sort of cave or tunnel and he climbed down to examine it.

He found that the ravine which he had been following branched out of this larger ravine and that this latter had been roofed with boards and logs and brush, forming a sort of covered tunnel, which was completely concealed save at this point of juncture where the brook emerged into the narrower way. He was now hot upon the trail though he probably gave no sign of excitement.

He judged by the stars, he said, that this covered ravine ran north and south and if it did and ran fairly straight, its northern end would be somewhere in the neighborhood of the railroad village of Le Chesne, or at least near the line of trail thereabout, while its southern end would be at the steep slope of the hills southward.

He entered the passage and found that the brook trickled along here not much wider than in the narrower ravine, and that the bed of the passage was hard and fairly flat. He reached above him and pressed against the artificial covering. Cross-pieces had been wedged between the converging rock at intervals, two or three feet below the upper surface and between these he could feel the considerable thickness of brush which lay overhead. Wagons could easily pass here, as safe from aerial observation as a rabbit in his burrow. And so this sunken road and what it led to might be used almost to the last minute as the irresistible line of Marshall Foch advanced.

The rest was easy, yet it is characteristic of Slade that he called himself a fool for not having smelled out this covered ravine in his wanderings. It was dark and musty inside, the little brook meandering aimlessly from one side to the

other, with pools here and there, and the foliage overhead emitting a pungent, rotten odor from its soaking in the recent heavy rains. Some of our own boys, you may be interested to know, recently passed through this very ravine in their advance toward Tourteron. But one look inside it was enough for me.

Slade hurried through it, parting the matted roofing now and then for a glimpse of the guiding stars, and was assured that the passage led almost due north. And somewhere along this dark, sickening way, he was siezed with hauting doubts, lest he be pursuing a phantom. What he sought was so great and the clue to it so trifling! "But I remembered how Indian scouts would follow a trail a hundred miles just because they found a hair sticking to a bramble," he told his superiors. And so he hurried on, on, with hope sometimes mounting, sometimes falling.

After he had gone what he thought was nearly two miles there came a welcome freshness in the air which much relieved him, and he soon saw the clear sky overhead. Before him, to the south, the open country spread away and in the distance

he could distinguish two or three tiny lights which he thought were within the allied lines.

The ravine opened into a spacious basin filled partly by a small lake and enclosed by dense woods. He followed the guiding stream out of the dank passage and found that it had its source in this lofty little sheet of water nestling almost at the very brink of a steep decline. In its black, placid bosom his guiding stars were reflected and a sombre tree of swamp larch cast its inverted shadow in the water.

Farther back there were others—larches and cedars "Good old scouts, I told 'em," Slade said afterwards; "they love the water, same as I do."

So there, Master Roy Blakeley, scout and would-be author—there is the sequel of your Temple Camp and your Black Lake and your silent, companionable trees.

Tom Slade saw the lay of the land clearly enough now. This covered ravine was in fact the lofty crevice between two hills, and from the distant allied lines its end must have taken the form of a great rough V high up where those twin hills parted. There was no suggestion of this upon close inspection, but it is a faculty of the scout to see in his mind's eye a bird's-eye view

of the locality he is studying. Thus the scout has always two pairs of eyes.

What Tom Slade saw about him was just a lake amid woods rising on either side, east and west, and below him, southward, an expanse of open country. In the little jungle of crowded brush, which from a distance must have seemed to half fill that big V, stood a great, ugly thing swathed in canvas. It poked its big nose up slanting ways at the stars as if to threaten those friendly monitors of the night for helping this weary young fellow who stood leaning against it, trying to realize his good fortune. All about it and over it the brush and foliage clustered, as if ashamed to own its presence in their still, obscure retreat; and in front of it, between it and the steep decline, a graceful larch tree stood in all its silent, supple dignity. From one of its lower spreading limbs a broken branch hung loose, the splintered remnant blowing to and fro in the night.

"It seemed as if it must hurt," said Slade to Captain Whitloss, "and I felt kind of as if I ought to go and bandage it up—especially as it did me such a good turn, as you might say . . ."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE LAST ADVENTURE

And so, like Archibald Archer, that murderous old brute of the wooded hills passes out of the story. A gun crew in Santois turned their handle until they got the muzzle of their gun just exactly where they wanted it and that was straight for the big wooded V between the hills. And having fixed everything just right, they let fly—once, twice, three times—and once again for good measure. And the old giant of the mountains was never heard from again. But when those hills where Tom Slade hurried in the night finally came within the iron lines of Marshal Foch, they found the poor old monster knocked clear off his pedestal, where Tom Slade of the Flying Corps had leaned to rest that night when his scouting lore did not forsake him.

But gun crews and fliers notwithstanding, I

like to think that the hand which put that steel brute out of business was the small white hand of an eager, generous little French girl who lived away at the foot of those hills in the enemy country. And I am sure that Archibald Archer would grin with unspeakable delight if he could but know that this good end was accomplished by a "souveneerrr."

I am now close upon the end of my reminiscences of Tom Slade with the Flying Corps and it remains only to tell you what little is really known about his tragic end.

On his way back from the enemy country that night he was blown out of his course and drifted over La Chapelle which is about midway between Epernay and the now famous Chateau-Thierry. If he had been able to fly low enough to follow the road through Suippes to Chalons all would have been well, for the approximate time of his return was known, and no shots were to be fired. Indeed, so far west as La Chapelle they knew of his being abroad on secret business, and should not have fired. But a smart Aleck anti-aircraft crew, hearing the whir of a Hun machine, must take a pop at it and Slade fell with a fractured

TOM DISCOVERS A BIG GUN.

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head among the tangled ruins of his machine. And that was the end of the Hun plane.

Our newspaper said that Slade was "suffering from a slight wound received near La Chapelle." Nothing about this blundering business which all but lost him his life. In point of fact he suffered from very grave mental disturbances as a result of his fall and I believe that he had not regained in full measure his mental faculties at the time of his final exploit. But in this I may be mistaken. In any event, he was morose and despondent while in the hospital, often mumbling threats to kill someone. You will be glad to know that Jeanne visited him there, which seemed to please him, and I think that if he had lived they might, perhaps, have seen more of each other. One of the nurses told me that he asked Jeanne if "that man came back" and when she said that he did, Slade compressed his lips and said nothing. That matter is a mystery to me. He made few friends in the hospital, because of his natural taciturnity, and also because of his mental depression.

He was well on toward recovery, however, when the bomb was dropped which killed two of the nurses. There seems to be no authority for his vowing vengeance against the hostile fliers,

but he is remembered to have said that he "knew it was that man's work."

He was discharged from the hospital as cured, and after some difficulty succeeded in being reinstated in the Flying Corps, with a combat plane, which was now his one desire. "I got a special reason," Captain Whitloss says he told him. Those are the last words which I have heard of as coming from Tom Slade.

Of the circumstances attending his last adventure you are already aware, and save for a bit of lurid coloring, the newspaper account seems to be about correct. He rose in pursuit of the Hun plane from Jonchery, west of Rheims, but there seems to be no reason to suppose that he knew who, in particular, he was pursuing.

Both planes passed out of sight above the clouds and shortly thereafter the enemy plane was seen to fall. It fell in La Toi, as the news article stated, just within the allied lines. Its occupant, a German named Otto Brenner, was in the wreckage, quite dead. The fuel tank of his plane had been shot through.

About ten minutes afterward Slade's empty machine came fluttering down, turned turtle and plunged headlong to earth. It did not fall upon

a "rocky hillside" as the paper stated, but in a field within the allied lines. The body of Tom Slade was seen to fall separately but there can be no truth in the declaration which one heard in Rheims (especially among children) that it descended ten minutes after the plane fell. Such a thing would be manifestly impossible.

It is true that a German airman, flying over the American lines, dropped the cap said to have been worn by Slade. In it were his identification disk, corresponding to the number against his name in the army files, and the gold cross which he won while a scout. The Germans found his body half way up a rocky slope and buried it in Pevy which now is in the hands of Americans. I visited the grave which had a little white wooden cross above it on which his name is carved in rough letters, very German. I understand his name was sent to them across No Man's Land under a white flag after his identity has been ascertained from his disk number. So maybe Fritzie has a soft spot, after all.

For your sake I laid a little wreath upon the grave and wrote on a piece of bark (which I think you told me is the Scouts' writing material) that it was from the troop in Bridgeboro.

# PART THREE

# THE GRAY METEOR

## CHAPTER I

Tells of certain perplexities which confronted me; also of how I journeyed into Switzerland and of how I first chanced to see the Gray Meteor.

THE foregoing chapters which embody the story of Slade's career, were, as I have said before, intended for the perusal of Roy Blakeley alone. They form, as you will have seen, a sort of story within a story. What went before, and what I am now about to write, would never have been written (much less published) save for the startling discoveries which I have recently made. As I feel now, I should like not only Roy Blakeley, but the whole world, to know the full truth of this strange business.

You will have noticed, no doubt, that in my somewhat rambling story of Slade's career I refrained from mentioning the shocking revelations that were contained in the papers which I found in the Scuppers. To me (who did not know him), the death of the brave airman was not so

much of a shock, but that he should have sold himself and his undoubted talents to the enemy while all the while keeping up the appearance of loyal service to the United States, was appalling —almost unbelievable. When and how, in those latter days of his brave career, he had played into their blood-guilty hands, I could not conjecture. But that is the wily genius of spies and traitors.

I tried to make allowance for him on the supposition that his mind had been polluted, his vision knocked askew, away back home by the disloyal German by whom he had been employed. I told myself that though he was brave, he was yet ignorant and weak, perhaps.

They had sent him into the enemy country partly because he had, in some measure, the German type of countenance and spoke German passably. Was there some obscure vein of German running in him, I asked myself. That might explain, though it would not excuse. He had spoken in blunt praise of his German captors and had come near to being court-martialled for it. Was that just common fairness to certain Germans in a particular instance? Or did it show the bent of his mind? It almost made me sick to

think about it. And I felt guilty to be perpetuating his reckless courage for the benefit of the boy who had believed in him and still revered his memory.

It is enough for me to say now that I shall write the balance of this story with a clearer conscience.

Perhaps you will say that I should have come to believe in him when I learned of his brave, heroic acts. But I beg you to remember the watch, with T. S. engraved on the back of it, and the wallet packed full of treason which was connected with it by a heavy lock-link chain. You remember that? You remember that the watch was made in America? You remember that in that wallet was the photograph of a Bridgeboro girl? Bridgeboro, only a small place too, where he had lived and where I lived, and where Roy lived. You remember the part of that girl's letter on the back of which was written a traitorous memorandum? Here it is now—I copy it:

> . . . looked about it seemed as if everyone in Bridgeboro was there. And of course the Boy Scouts and that excruciating imp of a Blakeley boy were on hand—Ruth's brother, you know. Oh, by the way, who do you suppose is in the old place on Terrace Ave.? Guess. The Red Cross ladies, and I'm working with——

Heaven knows how many times in my mind I afterward tried to wrench that chain asunder and separate that name from the mementoes of treachery and crime, just as I had actually tried in my amazement and bewilderment as I sat in that little dank cave away up in the Scuppers where he had fallen.

But in the end of it this was the sad conclusion that I reached—that brave and heroic exploits may be colored and exaggerated by those who tell them, but that records kept in secret do not lie. And if I did not picture the adventurous young American as a patriot in those gathered reminiscences of his career, it was because I could not, for the haunting thought of some unknown, dark activities of his were always in my mind, a stalking spectre. Yet not a hint did I give to Archer even, much less to Roy, of what I had found out.

But there were one or two things which often puzzled me in the writing of those chapters for Roy and I will mention these now. One was that Archer told me Slade had no use for girls and never received letters from them. Yet here was a very friendly, companionable letter, or part of one, at least. Perhaps that is of no importance.

But this Bridgeboro girl had said in her letter that *that extraordinary imp of a Blakeley boy was on hand—Ruth's brother.* Did not Tom Slade know that Roy was Ruth Blakeley's brother, without her saying that? Could she have supposed that he did not know who Roy was?

I thought about it a good deal and I did not cease to think of it until a certain trouble of my own intervened and put all thoughts of Tom Slade out of my mind for the time. This was the very troublesome cough I had contracted as a result of being gassed. I could not seem to get the gas out of my lungs, and it was becoming a matter of concern to me. I have seen young fellows, recovered from the immediate, acute effects of gassing, go to the wall with consumption. So when the doctors in Paris told me that a change of air would be my best physician I lost no time in seeking the mountains of Switzerland. I may mention, if you care to know it, that I am now quite recovered and that with returning strength there came to me a great light which brought me happiness and peace of mind.

Of this I must now tell you.

The little hamlet of St. Craix is about thirty miles south of Basel in a jumble of mountains

which anywhere else but in Switzerland would require a couple of hundred square miles to stand in. Solothurn is the nearest place of any size but not exactly near enough to be neighborly, and the great Ramieux Mountain rears its mighty bulk to the north. Some twenty odd miles to the west is France, but I should say it would be a couple of hundred million miles, more or less, if you went over the mountains. From Ramieux Mountain I think you could slide down to Vetroz, get lunch, and then slide on down and catch the train at Delemont.

My host, Hans Twann, had his little hostelry on the side of Meiden Mountain, a mere hubble of a couple of thousand feet or so, and his orchard tilted up like a picture on an easel. With the apples that grew in this orchard he made cider, and he also made Kirschwasser, a very agreeable beverage notwithstanding its formidable name.

He accommodated tourists on the side, in more ways than one, since his land was all up and down, and from a distance his quaint little place must have looked as if it were fixed like a postage stamp against the rising wall of the mountain. What kept it there I cannot for the life of me tell you. I always felt safer in back of it for

then, if the worst happened, I should fall down against it and stop. There was a little odd patch of level land here, too, and he utilized it for an arbor where I used to sit.

Here Herr Twann would often join me and I would banter him about the insignificant size of his country. "Ach," he would say, "dat iss becauss it iss all crunched up—what? Like a piece of trash paper. Spread it out flat and it iss bigger dan your United States." There was some force to this argument.

Herr Twann and his little household talked German among themselves, like most of the inhabitants of northern Switzerland, though they all spoke a sort of English which they had picked up from the many tourists who resorted to the funny little place before the war.

His two children, Egbert and Emmie, were my particular friends and many were the Alpine rambles that we had together. They were about ten and eleven respectively, I think, the girl being the younger. Often we would go down into St. Craix, the oddest little community you would wish to see, with its little spired chapel just like a church in a toy village.

It was upon the Sunday of my first attendance

at this church that something happened which greatly distressed me. It all grew out of the mischievous banter of those children. When the service was over they showed me the relics (of the sort that any church in Switzerland has), hallowed mementoes of saints and martyrs, and I hope I showed a seemly reverence for them. As we left the hamlet they led me to a window of the little schoolhouse and showed me within a skull which they said had been found in a glacier.

"Now," said I, "if you will show me the apple that William Tell shot from his son's head, I shall have seen all the sights."

"We will show you the gray meteor," they said. "You know what dat meteor iss?"

"A big rock," I told them, and I added sagely that we were not so stupid in America.

They laughed and said I should see what kind of a rock this "gray meteor" was.

After we had walked some distance they began looking eagerly across a certain field at the farther side of which a mountain arose. Right at the base of this mountain was a kind of grove. Their laughing voices echoed back from the rugged height as we entered the field, and sounded

clear and musical in the quiet calm of that Alpine Sabbath morn.

"Come," they urged.

As we neared the foot of the mountain the irregular contour of the base developed into little rocks and caves, and then I saw emerging from one of these a living figure which paused irresolutely, watching us.

"See—now you are fooled!" little Emmie cried. "You are so sure it iss a rock!"

"You mean *that* is the meteor?" I asked.

"So—you are fooled!" she answered gleefully.

As we approached closer, I could see the figure clearly, and a more forlorn and pitiable spectacle I have never gazed upon. Seeing me, he started to run, but thinking better of it, paused and waited for us with an aspect of indescribable terror. I wore the regulation khaki uniform of correspondents at the front, and this he seemed to scrutinize with a kind of bewildered agitation.

"Hello," I said, as we reached what I suppose I must call his lair. "How are *you* this bright Sunday morning?"

He made no answer, but watched me furtively and once or twice seemed on the point of making off. It was evident that he either lived or spent

much time in a little cave formed by the rocks for near this were the charred remnants of a fire. He was a young fellow of perhaps twenty, with blond, disordered hair, and blue eyes, which latter feature disconcerted me greatly for they bespoke a kind of breathing suspense, entirely unwarranted by our innocent intrusion. His cheekbones were very noticeable, he looked thin and ill-nourished, and the end of his mouth twitched distressingly.

As to his apparel, it was in the last stages of shabbiness. His trousers were, I dare say, of khaki, but they hung loose and looked ridiculous in the absence of accompanying puttees. He wore the coat of a German officer (of what rank or branch of service I could not say) and to complete his grotesque appearance, he had a compass hung on a cord around his neck which dangled upon his chest like a lady's ornament.

"Well, how do you find yourself?" I repeated at a venture, for I did not know whether or not he spoke English. He looked at me for a few seconds, picked up a stick and then began to cry.

Seeing that no exchange of communication was possible between us, and feeling that my intrusion was chiefly responsible for his agitation, I told

my little friends that we had better go. They seemed delighted to have exhibited this creature to me.

"I think we should not laugh at him," I said, as we resumed our homeward way. "His brain is evidently not right and he is sick. Why do you call him the gray meteor?"

"Is he not gray—his coat?" piped up young Egbert.

"Yes, but—meteor."

"Ach, he come nobody know where—like out of the sky."

As I looked back I could see the poor creature kneeling over his charred fire rubbing one stick across another so that it looked as if he were playing a violin.

## CHAPTER II

Tells of my visit with the Gray Meteor and of how I entertained him and of his call upon me.

You will believe that I lost no time in quizzing my host about this mysterious "gray meteor."

"Ach," said he, "some deserter. Genefa and Locle are full uff them."

"Geneva and Locle are near the border," I said, "and all they have to do is to take a hop, skip and a jump to get there. There are some from over the Rhine, too," I added, for I did not relish his implication that all deserters were from France.

"Well, diss one is American, anyway," he said.

"And how about his German coat?" I asked; "how do you know he is American?"

"He iss crazy, dat is why," he laughed. "He must be alwavss camping out. Don't you worry about him."

"He is not crazy," I retorted, a bit nettled, "but I will tell you what is the matter with him——"

"Sure, he iss lazy."

"He is suffering from shell shock or something of that sort," I said, ignoring his remark. "And what I should like to know is, how did he find his way up here in such a state. Besides," I added, "he should have care and companionship. He is in no condition to be living in that hole of a cave. Do you know anything about him?"

"He come apout a mont' ago—nobody knows how. I ask him een, put he will haff nudding. The childrens, dey call him de gray meteor. Maybe he come from Mars—what?"

I soon found that if this poor, strayed soul had ever been a sensation he had long since ceased to be one. The children still found him a source of entertainment, made fun of him, and I am afraid, annoyed him. Otherwise he lived in his cave, shunned the village and all other haunts of men. I understood that he lived chiefly on fish which he caught, but sometimes the children left food near his solitary retreat.

As to his being a deserter, that may very well have been the case, I thought, but deserter or not, he was suffering from shell shock if I knew anything about the manifestations of that dreadful thing.

How he had penetrated so far to this obscure retreat I could not conjecture, for though not far distant in miles from the border, the spot was unfrequented and almost inaccessible. Nor was such remoteness necessary. In Basel, or any of the places along the western frontier, he would have been as safe from molestation as at the North Pole. First and last, his presence there puzzled and interested me, and his condition aroused my sympathy.

All the next day my thoughts dwelt upon his gaunt appearance and frightened look and on that vacillating timidity and uncertainty of action which bespoke a crippled power of will. There was no mistaking those signs; I had seen them before.

The morning following I dug into my grip and picking out several of the bully old pals which I had brought with me, sallied forth to the retreat of the "gray meteor." From what Herr Twann had said I surmised that he spoke English and finding him kneeling by the ashes of his fire, in about the same position as when I had left him the day before, I said cheerily:

"Good morning—fine Alpine weather."

The look he gave me pierced me to the heart. I felt that he would either run away or crawl to

me like a guilty dog in grovelling shame. He breathed heavily and his eyes were lit with an anguish of terror. He started to rise but apparently had not the strength of will to lift himself and as he crouched there a twig broke under his feet and he started as if a cannon had been shot off close by.

"I think you've been trying to get a fire," said I pleasantly, "by rubbing those two sticks together. Am I right?"

He only looked at me and smiled uncertainly.

"That's a pretty hard stunt," I continued. "Suppose we start it with a match this time and tomorrow I'll hunt this business up. I've a book that tells about those things. You and I will run through it together."

I lighted the little parcel of twigs which he had gathered and after watching the flame a few moments he said, "More?" and seemed irresolute whether to bring more twigs or not.

"A few more, then a couple of big pieces, and we'll be all hunk," I said.

The fire well started, we sat down beside it.

"It's hot, isn't it?" he asked nervously.

"Quite hot," said I.

Then he gulped as if it had been an effort for him to say that much.

"You were right the first time," I added, which seemed to afford him a kind of childish pleasure.

"Now," said I, "if you think I'm a soldier because I have on this khaki suit, you're mistaken. I'm a fellow that writes stories and things, and I like to camp just as you do. I think you and I are very much alike. Will you tell me your name?"

He shook his head, smiling weakly. It seemed to me that he had no objection to telling me, but that he just lacked the stamina to do it. I therefore began to speak of something else and after a moment he said:

"Tasso."

"Is that your name?"

He nodded as if he had done a great thing in telling me. Then a slight movement of my arm startled him and he jumped and trembled.

"Are you Italian?" I said; "is that your first name or your last name?"

"Both," he said.

"Well," said I, "you and I are going to be friends, anyway. And I've brought along another friend, too. He's in a book named *Kidnapped*.

He went on a long hike and lived in caves just like you. He made a long trip through mountains with a companion and at last got to Edinburgh."

He looked at me for a moment in a puzzled way and then asked hesitatingly, "Did he get there in the night?"

"Indeed, I don't remember," I said, "but we shall find out."

Suddenly he began to cry like a baby and it was pitiful to see him. While he was crying I began to read those wonderful adventures of David Balfour and he soon seemed to listen. But with every stir he would start like a frightened animal and he had a way of twisting and pulling the cord around his neck which was heartrending to see, so weak and aimless was it. But he was attentive and evidently interested.

Thus began my acquaintance with that forlorn derelict of the great war, and my simple program for helping him seemed to have begun auspiciously. Each day I visited him and read to him and though he said little, and that to no purpose, he seemed interested and would listen silently hour after hour, starting at the merest sound or

movement, and twirling and twisting the cord on which hung his rusty, broken compass.

On the evening of the fourth or fifth day I saw him coming up the mountain path toward the little inn. He paused trembling at the edge of our little arbor and breathed as if he were very weary. I rose slowly, being particular to make no noise or sudden movement, and greeted him as if he had been coming each day. He stood uncertainly, intertwining his fingers, and seemed on the point of retreating. But he had come, and that was a great step in advance.

"I think it is my front name," he said, as if that were the purpose of his call.

"Oh, yes," said I. "Tasso. So now I'll call you Tasso."

"If it thunders will you come and stay with me?" he asked.

"Indeed I will," said I, "but it's not going to thunder and tomorrow you and I are going to take a hike together."

## CHAPTER III

Tells of my ramble with the Gray Meteor and of his singular conduct, and of a discovery which I made.

I HAVE seen soldiers suffering from shell shock led across the boulevard in Paris, held by the hand like children. I have seen one, a great, strapping fellow, guided to his seat in a restaurant. I have seen one stand upon the street wringing his hands and sobbing because he did not know which way to go. And no one of these unfortunates that I have ever seen would have ventured out alone upon the most trifling errand. Panic fear of themselves is their most distressing and conspicuous symptom.

Yet here was one of them whose last vestige of stamina seemed to have forsaken him, but who had yet penetrated into these rugged mountain heights. It was not so much the distance from France, as the endless up-and-down distances and winding ways of those Alpine fastnesses which made the thing seem impossible. Apparently he

had a half forgotten smattering of some of the primitive outdoor arts and I had won his confidence and aroused some hope and interest in him by promising him a "hike." But he was no more able to reach this sequestered spot unaided than a baby in arms.

Who, then, had aided him?

Try as I would, I could not persuade him to remain over night at my little inn, the fear of any noise seeming constantly with him, and I let him go, realizing with regret that perhaps he was as well off in his solitude with only the softer voices of nature about him.

But in the morning I was early at his retreat, with high hopes of the little excursion which awaited us. For I had thought that a quiet ramble in those unfrequented places would be a balm and solace to his poor nerves and wavering mind. Little did I dream what that ramble would reveal.

Our path took us through a forest thick with pines of such magnificence as I had never before seen, one as much like another as the pillars of a collonade, and for which this Jura range is famous. I have it from my host that after rainy weather the pungent odor from these pines is actually in-

toxicating and that wayfarers have been known to slumber under its fragrant influence for several days. I think I shall never again smell the spirit-rousing pungence of a Christmas tree without recalling our memorable ramble in that dim cathedral of the Jura Mountains.

I noticed that the sounds of nature had no such distressing effect upon my companion as did the ruder clamor of human clap-trap, and that he was more at ease in these majestic scenes. Perhaps kind nature, that great physician who asks no fee, had pointed out his solitary cave to him, after the thunderous tumult of the war—I do not know. But in any event he seemed more at ease than I had yet seen him. And I perceived clearly enough then that he was not insane—only that he had lost his grip.

He seemed to take an interest in everything about us and surprised me with the knowledge which he showed of nature and her little oddities. Once he picked up a twig saying that it had grown on the north side of a tree, and again a scrap of rock which he said was sandstone. "They're all sandstone, these mountains," he said, or rather asked, as if he were not quite sure of himself and afraid that I would contradict him.

"Yes," I said. "I guess they're mostly sandstone," though, to tell you the truth, they might have been soapstone for all I knew.

Not once did he speak of the war and when I cautiously mentioned it in a casual way he paid no attention. It seemed that he had forgotten all about it—blessed lapse of memory, I thought.

Well, after a while we came upon rough country, like a miniature chain of mountains up there amid those mighty peaks. Here were rocky hollows and no end of little caves and glens—such picturesqueness as I had never seen. They say these caves are filled with the bones of extinct animals and one bleached relic I picked up. But my companion told me that it was only wood. "See," he said smiling, "it has a grain."

I think it was the first instance of a genuine smile that I had seen upon his wan countenance.

Presently he kneeled down and examined some mossy earth, and straightway, to my regret, he became greatly excited. We were in a sort of little canon which extended some hundred yards or so and petered out in an area of fairly level forest land where the trees grew sparsely in a rocky soil.

"What is it?" I asked, a bit anxiously.

"See?" he said, standing and placing his heel in the moss. "See?"

"You mean it's a footprint?" I asked.

"See?" he asked nervously, almost in suspense, as if dreading my reply.

"Surely," said I; "I dare say others have passed here. We are not so far from the village."

"It's mine," he said. "See?" And ignoring me, he crept along, for all the world as if he had lost something, examining the earth with great concern and increasing satisfaction.

I had never before seen him so interested, and my own interest was aroused, for if he had indeed passed here himself it might afford a clue to something or other—though I did not know what.

"It is only moss," I said, "and——"

"It's wax-moss," he interrupted me with the first sign of assurance he had ever shown. "They stay in wax-moss—See?"

He was now so engrossed with his quest that I could but watch and follow him.

"Have you been here before?" I queried. He gave no heed, but hurried along through the gully until, having gone a hundred feet or more, his will power seemed to collapse and he waited for me, wringing his hands distressingly.

"What is it?" I said.

"It's over there," he answered, clutching me in evident terror.

"Well, we'll go and see it," I answered cheerily, and we moved along, he still clutching me as if afraid that I would desert him.

It was curious to see how the one or two footprints he had found aroused him to a flight of energy which petered out as quickly and left him helpless and agitated. I could not for the life of me imagine why those footprints should have interested him so and sent him loping along the gully. He found no others, but apparently the sight of those two or three produced a glimmer of memory in him. Evidently he had been here before, and was wishful to retrace his former path but lacked the will and courage to do so.

"I know where it is," he said, wringing his hands. "I know now. Will you go with me?"

His look was so imploring and his voice so full of a kind of panic fear that I was persuaded there was something he wished to show me but dared not. His will seemed to tipple like a see-saw between resolution and irresolution, and he fell into the old habit of starting and clutching me at every sound.

"Come," I said, "I'll go with you."

I cannot describe the eager terror in his eyes, the trembling of his hands as he clutched my arm, and the irresolute pauses which he made as he passed along through the gully. Finally he seemed about to clamber out of the rocky depression, hesitated, and broke down utterly, sobbing like a child.

"Look—there—," he at last managed to gasp "You—go—and see." And he gulped and tightened his grasp in panic fright.

I looked across a mass of piled up rock and saw, some distance away, a large object which seemed to stir as I watched it.

"That's it," he said.

"All right," said I. "You stay here, sit down on that stone and I'll go and see."

He sat down, twirling the cord around his neck and watching me eagerly. As I clambered up the low embankment, he started at the slight noise I made.

Picking my way among the boulders I approached the object, until, a few feet from it, I paused and looked at it aghast. It was the wreck of a German observation balloon. The gas was entirely gone from its great bag which lay plastered down upon the rocks, and its formerly glass-en-

closed car was in complete ruin. I think it must have blown across those rocks for some distance to have been so shattered.

But all the details of its wreck and delapidation were as nothing to me when I saw certain markings on the broken side of its car. There were two black crosses side by side, with the German Imperial coat of arms between them.

The balloon with the two black crosses was known far and wide upon the west front. It was the little palace, the lofty headquarters of an arch demon of aerial frightfulness, who was the peering eye and minion of his murderous superiors. I had talked with those who knew and catered to this sneaking beast, and cowered before his swaggering arrogance—a poor little French girl and her crippled father. He it was who had come from America to help the Fatherland; who "knew about ze ships, when zey will go"; whose two black crosses were a mark of special honor and distinction!

Well, by the grace of Heaven, he was a mystery no longer. Poor, dribbling, guilt-haunted wretch —he had brought me face to face with the wrecked instrument of his crimes.

I make no excuse for what I did—I am only

human. I strode back to where the stricken creature sat, twirling and twisting the cord about his neck. I was trembling and my words came short and spasmodic, but whether from amazement or rage I do not know now. I only know that he cowered before me like a reed blown in the blast —it stings me to the heart as I think of it now.

"So you have got your reward," I said. "Be sure that God knows how to punish such as you! I have seen your evil eye put out and there, *there* it lies, over among those rocks. You must come back to it, eh? Like a murderer to its victim!"

His breath came in great, panting gulps, he wrung and twisted his hands, and his look—oh, it will haunt me forever.

"I know who you are now! You will tell a little French girl that Americans are murderers and hang their people to lamp-posts! America, where you lived yourself and made your living—— Now you've got your reward! I have seen the house that you defiled with your presence —the little cottage of a French peasant! I don't know how many ships lie at the bottom of the ocean on account of you, you sneaking, lying blackguard! But you've got your reward. Those innocent women and babies at the bottom of the

sea are better off than you—with your peering eye put out and your senses drivelling. No wonder you're afraid! Probably the thunder of some Yankee cannon knocked your brain endways. The most bestial German is a saint compared with you —Monsieur le Capitaine!" I sneered. "No, keep away from me!" For he held his hands toward me with a pitiful gesture. "I'll not interfere with the decree of God. You can wander in these mountains like a lost soul for all I care—drivelling about poor murdered Indians in America. If you've forgotten your name, I'll tell it to you. It's Toby! I know of one other almost as bad as you are—Slade his name is—who would sell his country. Over there at that balloon is a piece of broken cable—go and hang yourself with it—if you've got the nerve!"

And with that I marched away. Scarcely had I gone ten paces when his voice rose in a scream to wake the Heavens. Again and again he screeched in an anguish of despair and his piercing cries echoed from those lonely mountains until they died away in pitiable sobs.

But I never so much as turned to look at him.

## CHAPTER IV

Tells how I went forth into the night, and of my quest, and of my singular state of mind.

"So that is the infamous Captain Toby," I thought, as I started back to the inn, all agog over this discovery. "Monsieur le Capitaine, the sky spy, accessory to a thousand murders! Another of Dennheimer's recruits. Well, he has his reward. He would have fared worse, I consoled myself, if he had fallen within the allied lines.

But already (though I would not acknowledge it) I had begun to feel the first pangs of regret, not because I had denounced him, but because I had not at least brought him back and left him in his cave where I had found him. For if, indeed, I wished to leave his punishment to Providence, it would have seemed only fair to return him to the spot where Providence had placed him when I intervened.

I began to wonder how he had drifted so far

and what were the circumstances of his tragic flight. The broken cable told much, but what was the experience which had left him with a tottering, broken will—the victim of hideous fear and haunting guilt? He had evidently a hazy recollection of landing in the darkness, for he had asked me, in his eager, furtive way, if *David Balfour* had reached his destination at night.

I believed that his condition had been worse—was perhaps getting better when I first saw him. And I pictured his being carried through the darkness, a crazed victim locked in his little car, storm-tossed perhaps, borne over those majestic peaks, beating against his glass enclosure in crying fright, and at last dragged across rough canons and over rocks and crawling out of the wreckage in the blackness of night in this unknown country. I pictured him wandering aimlessly among the hills and glens, in storm and tempest perhaps, and finally finding refuge in his lone cave.

Before I had reached the inn I turned and retraced my steps to the scene of our parting, but he was gone. I was siezed with remorse. The night was coming on, and the thought of the poor wretch stricken anew by the shock of my tirade, roaming aimlessly among those caverns, went to my heart.

This, I thought, was not the way Uncle Sam treated his enemy prisoners. I went back to his cave hoping that I might find him there, but there was no sign of him, and I turned back toward the inn remorsefully.

And now I did not spare myself. I recalled my effort to find excuse, or at least a plausible explanation, for Tom Slade's truckling to the enemy, because he was my young friend's pal and lived in my own home town. I recalled my agreeable pastime of recounting the episodes of his loyal service, and of how I had put into the background that dark secret of the Scuppers. But for this poor, half demented creature, who was punished already, I had had nothing but heartless contempt and loathing. I would have thought shame to dishonor that grave in Pevy. Yet here was I dishonoring the dead—for was not this wretched thing dead in a way?

I cannot tell you of the pangs I suffered as the night drew on. Herr Twann, who had shown little sympathy or interest in our unhappy neighbor, seemed like a saint now compared to myself. A fine bungle I had made of my kind intent! I have seen wounded soldiers handled pretty roughly, but never one with genuine shell shock.

To my host and his good wife I said nothing of what I had learned—much less of what I had done, but all through the evening I nursed my remorse in silence.

As luck would have it, the night blew up cold and stormy. There is a keenness to the slightest breeze in these parts and I have wondered whether it is because of the narrow valleys it passes through, causing, as one might say, a perpetual draft. The rain comes in gusts.

Well, on this memorable night there was not so much as a star to be seen—only the tiny light away up on Ollon peak, which I always thought must be a star. Some hermit monks lived there, I understood, and lonely enough it must have been for them. Down in St. Craix we could see the lights, dimmed by the misty thickness of the blown rain, disappear one after another as the good peasant people went to their beds, and as I watched them from our tap-room window, I felt that no human being should be abroad in those mountains on such a night. Once there came a tap upon our door and I thought it might be that poor distracted soul, but it was only Laff Turtman, the herdsman, for a warming draught of kirschwasser. He was on his way down to Craix with his

sheep, and I could see them out in the path, making a kind of community of warmth by crowding together. The blazing fire in our tap-room was cheerful that night and we all sat about it.

At last I could stand it no longer and taking my host's oil-skin cape and hat from their peg, I announced that I was going to see if the Gray Meteor was all right, that being the name they always called him by. It pleased me to assume that he would be in his cave, and I would not entertain the thought that he was not there. But he was nowhere about the place. Outside were the two smooth sticks that he was wont to rub together with such childish confidence of getting a spark from them, and it went to my heart to see them lying there. The rain was streaming down the cliff above his cave and pouring over the opening like a waterfall.

I was thoroughly alarmed now, but what to do I did not know. I cannot say I had any sympathy for him more than any Christian would have for the lowest wretch cast adrift on such a night. I was in two minds whether to go all the way down into the village, but what could I do there? Awaken the good people out of their slumbers?

It was intolerable to do nothing, and I ended by doing the only other thing I could think of, and that was to pick my way through all that drenching rain and darkness to the wreck of his balloon. Now that he had seen it again, I suspected it would have a kind of fascination for him.

But he was not there and I was at my wits' end. The wreck looked tragic and uncanny enough in the night, the hollow, wrinkled bag moving to and fro, and simulating the stirrings of some crouching thing among the rocks. I groped about among the wreckage of the car and found a dented, rusted spyglass, which had doubtless stolen many a secret from behind our lines, and a jack-knife, so rusted that I could not open it. This I took—I do not know why.

Suddenly through the rain I heard a sound near me and peering about I saw a goggled head bobbing close by.

"Who is it—speak," I demanded, and I am afraid my voice was not quite steady.

But there was no answer and approaching I found it to be only an airman's helmet hanging from a hook in the broken moulding. Even as I felt of it I started at a rustling sound beneath me, but I supposed it was only some small creature

of the mountains who had made the forlorn ruin its home.

I had no wish to linger there and started homeward, drenched and utterly miserable. Nor will I deny that this weird spectacle in those rugged, dark-enshrouded mountains, had made me the prey of shadowy forebodings and uncanny fancies. I, too, must start at every little sound and shudder with a sort of vague apprehension. I cannot describe it any better than to say that I felt as if something dreadful were going to happen. I thought how the war had pushed its long, bloody tentacles out to the farthest corner of the world —causing murder in some tropic village, suicide in the ice-bound north—horror and distruction everywhere. And it was here upon these neutral Alpine hills, this war, stalking in the form of one distraught and guilty soul, who had been cast up here with all his crimes upon his head. "One cannot get away from it," I said.

I felt it, I knew it—that something, I knew not what, but something, was going to happen.

## CHAPTER V.

Tells of my experience in the night, and brings my formal narrative to a close.

THE household was gone to bed when I reached the little inn, but the fire had been left burning for me, and I hung my dripping garments before it and sank down on the massive settle. The candle was burning out but the blaze in the big fireplace diffused its grateful warmth and gave out a dim, fitful brightness. I remember how it checkered up the rough wainscot and low-raftered ceiling so that my eye was ever and again caught by moving figures which were nothing but the reflection of the dancing blaze. Outside the blown rain beat against the little windows in intermittent splashes, which seemed to heighten the sense of comfort and security within.

But I took small comfort in the dim warmth, for I was sick at heart—sick with horror and disgust at the renewed memory of that creature's deeds—treason—cowardly murder—but most of

all at myself. I tried to console myself with the reflection that it was better so, that after all I had been giving aid and comfort to the enemy. We do not get much consolation from the mental comforts which we manufacture for ourselves, and the result of all this idle thinking was just to take me back home to Bridgeboro and to conjure up thoughts of my young friend, Roy Blakeley. *Do a good turn daily,* he had said. I could see him as he said it! *Two on Sundays and holidays. Get a turning lathe and turn out good turns. Keep turning.* I smiled at the recollection of all his nonsense. . . A fine kind of a good turn I had done!

So I fell to thinking, or rather my mind wandered aimlessly back to that day when Roy and I had stood outside the Bridgeboro station, reading the account of Tom Slade's last exploit. I recalled the little catch in his voice when he asked me if I was "*sure* it was really true," and of how he looked across the street at the window of Temple Camp office, where hung the service flag with its single star. Then I thought of the grave in Pevy with its little wooden cross marked with rough lettering—absurdly German. I thought of how, even to the last moment of our parting, when he handed up my grips to the car platform,

he clung staunchly to the hope that somehow his pal was yet living.

"Well, at least," I reflected cynically, "Tom Slade had the decency to leave a few untainted memorials of loyal service behind him—enough to make a story. And I thanked my stars that no hint of other things had escaped from my pen, in that tale which I had written for Roy. That did not trouble my conscience at all now. Might it not go down as a good turn? And the girl, whoever she was, she must never know either. Where ignorance was bliss, 'twas folly to be wise. Why should I disgrace my own home town and bring shame upon this noble "good turner" and scout?

Then in my drowsy reverie (for the dying fire had cast its spell on me) I thought of something Slade had said to Jeanne Grigou—that you cannot disgrace yourself alone. Queer he had not thought of that when he had fallen into the web of the unspeakable Dennheimer. Why had he not thought of Bridgeboro then—little Bridgeboro which was first over the top with its loan quota. Had not the Schmitt affair been quite enough for little Bridgeboro which had had its name sprawled all over the New York papers on account of it?

Well, in any event, there should be no more of this business. . .

Roy—Roy—he would get over the shock of death, I mused. Nature provides for that. But the shock of disgrace. . . That was a pretty good story, too—stopping just short of. . . Yes, it was a pretty good story. And I would give it to Roy and say, "Here's a good turn I have turned out for you." And then . . .

Whew! How the rain beat against the window! The rattling of the loose frame interrupted my reverie so that I got up and stretched myself and went over and forced a folded scrap of paper between it and the jamb.

"I'll be thankful," I half yawned as I resumed my seat before the fire, "if this thing is over soon." I don't know whether I was thinking of the storm or the war.

But the rattling did not cease. Oh, it was the door and not the window. So I got up again—then stood stark still, feeling a tremor all over me. Not an inch could I move, only stand there, every nerve on edge, listening. If I had been certain of a tapping on that door I would have experienced no suspense, for suspense is tense un-

certainty, and I knew not whether it was a tapping or not.

I thought it was not, and to make sure I went over, unbarred the heavy door and threw it open.

Never while I live shall I forget that sight. He stood there, dripping, trembling; and if there had ever been a touch of the ridiculous in his appearance in that tattered, ill-fitting German coat, there was nothing but pathos in it now; his clothes hung in shining wetness to his form so that I saw with horror how gaunt and emaciated he was. He wore no hat and his blonde hair was streaking down over his face and he gazed out from between those drooping strands with such a pitiful look of appeal as I had never seen before.

"Yes," I said roughly, "come in—I'm glad you've come. No, don't touch me, but sit there by the fire—you're welcome. I was to blame. I'm sorry." It was odd, perhaps, but even in my relief at seeing him and giving him shelter, a little of my anger and resentment returned so that I was at an effort to repress it. "Dennheimer is worse than you, for he seduced you. Sit down—you needn't be afraid."

I seated myself in the great chair before the fire, but he remained standing with one hand upon

its massive back. His sleeve was tight and clinging, like a woman's, which gave him a grotesque look and somehow went to my heart. So standing, he spoke with a painful effort at composure as if his few words had been contemplated and rehearsed. As he spoke, I thought I saw in his eyes a kind of forced calmness as if he had at last groped his way to some peg to hang his wits on.

"That other name," he said, "say it."

I was surprised that after his experience he did not clutch my arm, but instead the chair and clung to it as if that were a part of his resolve. The poor, heroic effort at self-control was touching and I answered in a kinder tone.

"Other name? There isn't any other name. I want you to sit close to the fire and take off your coat and shoes; then we'll talk. See, I'll put a fresh log on."

"Say that name," he repeated, and already I could see his will power tottering. It had been strong enough for a request but not for continued insistence.

"I think you must remember Dennheimer," I said, "and I know of no other name. Of course, you knew Dennheimer."

He shook his head.

"Well," I persisted, "it is more important to get dry and warm. I wonder how you found your way here in such a night.'"

"I can find my way anywhere," he said; "I *had* to find my way to ask about the name."

I was puzzled.

"You mean your own name—Tasso?" I ventured.

"Two traitors," he said; "the other one. You said—you said—you said—*I* was one."

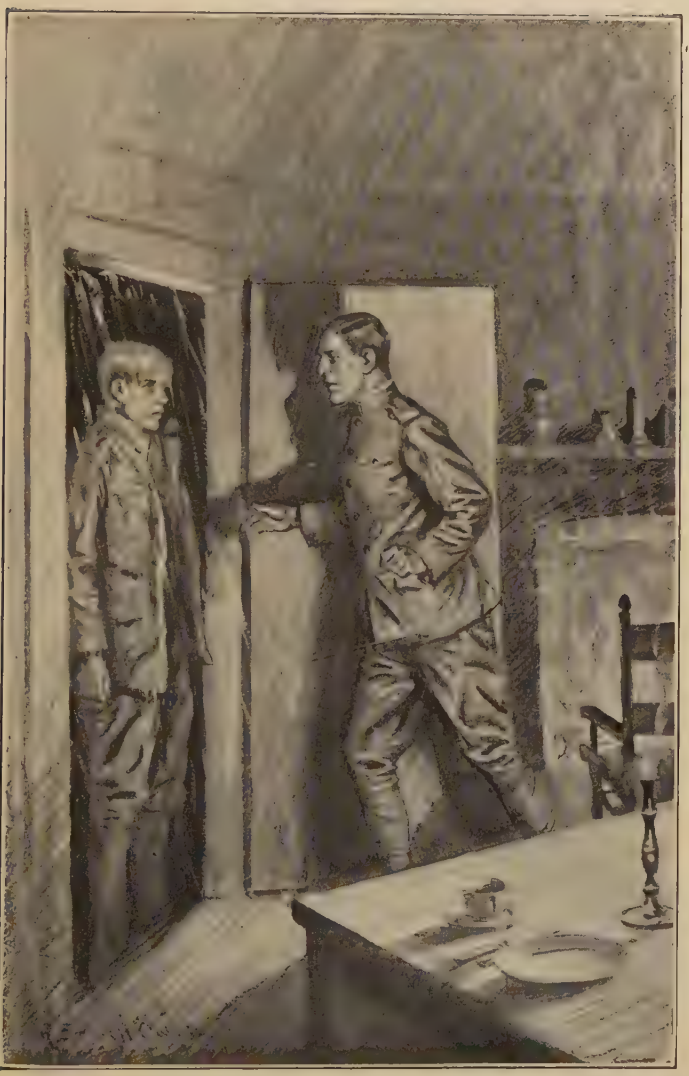
"Indeed," I said, "I am not burdening my mind with the names of traitors and if I named one it must have been in anger. As for you, I'll not be your judge—so sit down. You are tired and——"

"I've known a night like this before," he said, clutching the chair and gulping in the labor of his effort to be calm and rational; "I am glad on account of it—the rain—because—it—it—reminds me. *You* are a *coward* if you are afraid of a storm—you—are—scouts—the—they—" and his voice trailed away.

"Shh," I said. " You must be quiet. I will tell you the other name——"

"Yes," he said eagerly.

"It was a young fellow who lived in my town in America and came over here and after a while



HE STOOD THERE, DRIPPING, TREMBLING. —*Page 222.*

he got mixed up with the Germans somehow. Slade was his name—Tom Slade; and I'm sorry I mentioned it before. He's dead now——"

"Say his name again," he interrupted, trembling like a leaf.

"Slade—Tom Slade."

"Tomasso—not Tasso," he cried; "*that* is what he used to call me."

I thought his wits were wandering now, so I spoke soothingly, telling him again to sit down. But he clutched my arm and looked at me like a wild man. There was a light in his eyes, too, which I had never seen before. And if he lacked in will and had no power to speak connectedly, a certain fine abandon came to him which took me by storm. I knew, of course, that his tirade was but the reaction of his nervous strain and mental hallucinations, but some things that he said puzzled and rather startled me.

"Do you know—do you know what he—I did," he breathed. "You think you can bury—me—but —you can't. I—I'll tell you what I did—I strangled him—like that (he clutched my throat). I threw him out of the car. He—he tried—to stab me with—with my own jack-knife—he tried to cut the rope—but I can go too quick—up a

rope—anyway—trailing—stalking—you see how I can come here when I must have that name. That is *my* name—it belongs to me—me—it does. Give it to me—or—or I—it's your town as much as mine—I kept it from getting—disgraced—you're a coward if you're a-scared of storms—I rode a storm—I did—and I tracked you here—you are—*you're* a thief—you are! Give me my name—Tom Slade—I hunt for—that. I trailed it—I am *Tomasso!*"

I removed his weakening fingers from my throat and, standing, stroked his shoulders soothingly. Every part of him was shaking and he was breathing like a dog. He had to toss his head back to gulp out his excitement and he kept closing one eye in a nervous manner, most distressing to see.

"You *must* be quiet," I said, "and get your wet clothes off. Shh— I'll give you your name (for I thought it best to humor him) as soon as you do that. Hold up your arm—so; so I can get your coat off. Now sit down, quietly. There. It's because you are tired—that's all. Don't think about anything, just . . ."

But he would not sit down, only laid his head upon the back of the great chair and sobbed like a baby. I made no effort to dissuade him for

I knew that was just the effect of his exhausting tirade. I assumed, of course, that he had been talking nonsense. . . .

Copy of cable despatch which I sent to Roy Blakeley on the fourth day following the incidents related in the last chapter.

*"Tom Slade alive sick will recover am writing."*

Following is my last letter to Roy Blakeley, written at the little inn of Hans Twann above St. Craix village in Switzerland:

DEAR ROY:

I sent you a cable via Paris and Rouen. Tom Slade is alive and with me here in Switzerland. I waited four days before sending the cable in order that there might be no shadow of uncertainty about the facts, which seemed hardly believable. I think this will go through to you without much delay since the armistice has been signed. But you'll probably not see us for several months.

Tom is in care of the physician in Solothurn, the nearest town of any size, and I am sure he is in good hands. He cannot leave here for several weeks, however, and when he does we shall

probably be delayed in France in connection with getting his discharge or at least an extended furlough. I understand the censorship is off, so this should come to you unopened but in any case keep the whole business close until I return. I have already written a sketch of Tom's adventures for you but if there is no objection in any quarter I would like to publish this whole extraordinary business, first and last.

I can hardly collect my own mind sufficiently to give you a straight account of this amazing climax of Tom's career, and I will not now tell you anything contained in the several batches of story I mean to hand you. For you might as well know the whole thing. Tom himself is in no condition to talk and contradicts himself a great deal. But of the essential truth of what he tells me there can be no doubt.

He is suffering from shock incident to the terrible experience he had and this, I think, was aggravated by an injury to his head which he had previously sustained.

In the neighborhood where this final experience of his occurred it is current among the French peasants that the body of Slade fell from the clouds ten minutes after his machine crashed to

earth. I mentioned this supposed superstition in the narrative which I shall give you, saying that such a thing was manifestly impossible. It is a fact, however, that the victim fell ten minutes after Tom's machine descended. *But the victim was not Tom Slade.* You'll hardly credit your senses when you read this, but the body which fell on the rocky hillside was none other than that of Toby Schmitt, son of Adolph Schmitt, the Bridgeboro grocer!

This unspeakable young scoundrel was in the German service and was the moving spirit of their spy activities along a front of a hundred miles or more. He was, in fact, the Captain Toby, or Monsieur le Capitaine, whom you shall hear of in my narrative. Tom learned of this young traitor's presence along the front where he was on a secret mission in France and saw his photograph, which he instantly recognized. He also learned the means by which he might identify this arch villain—a double cross on the observation balloon which he often used.

As nearly as I can gather from Tom (for he has to be handled carefully still), the machine he was pursuing ascended into the clouds where, apparently, its occupant was to seek orders from

the balloon which was anchored there. But of that, of course, he is not certain. He downed the enemy flier and was about to shoot at the balloon when something happened to his machine gun. You may imagine his chagrin at finding himself thus helpless, especially when he noticed two black crosses on the balloon's car.

I think he must have been in a frenzy of rage and desperate resolution to do what he did. I am hoping that later he will be able to give a clearer account of it, and the doctor assures me that he will be. I gather that he circled about the cable of the balloon until finally in some way he was able to get hold of it. That he should have sacrificed his plane and trusted himself to this cable is an evidence of his towering resolve. The doctor thinks that even at that time his mental state was perhaps not quite normal.

In any event, he knew what he was going to do. That he raised himself, hand over hand, up that cable there seems no doubt. And he got into the car. He says that "Schmitty" which was the name he knew young Schmitt by in Bridgeboro, was frantic with fear, and so he must have been to see this redoubtable creature lifting himself up through that cloud-filled air and finally coming

aboard like a pirate over the side of a ship. Yet he dared not cut the rope for that would be to release his balloon and put it at the mercy of the wind.

Before Tom was yet within the car, Schmitt, who was apparently unarmed, or at least unprepared, reached down and secured the knife which Tom carried in his pocket. Tom was powerless to prevent this since his hands were upon the rope. *This is an American Boy Scout knife* and I myself later found it in the wreck of the balloon.

Tom says Schmitt tried to stab him with it. Of the frightful combat which took place in that car we can only imagine the details. Tom himself goes to pieces whenever he tries to talk about it. It was a case of one or the other—there seems little doubt of that. And in the end Schmitt either fell or was thrown out of the car. He must have been clutching at Tom's neck as he fell for he tore away the cord on which hung Tom's Scout cross and identification disk. These things were later picked up by the Germans who removed Schmitt's body. Schmitt had a watch bearing the initials of his name, T. S., and to this was fastened a wallet containing some of his treasonable papers. He had also been corresponding

with some girl in Bridgeboro and part of one of her letters, together with a photograph, were found in the wallet.

All of thesematters you shall find in the story which I hope soon to give you and the circumstances attending the discovery of these things and my own connection with them, will surprise you greatly.

I shall write no more now, for indeed I find it hard to set these things down. Tom is getting better each day, he talks of you very much, and looks forward to the day when he can be a scoutmaster. All through the days of his sorrowful weakness and distraction the war has been a thing forgotten, and it is hard to arouse in him memories of those last days of his military career. But of scouting and of you he thinks continually and never tires of talking. And I always call him Tomasso because, he says, it reminds him of you.

# POSTSCRIPT

## WRITTEN AFTER MY RETURN TO AMERICA

I SHALL not prolong this narrative with an account of our return through France, though it is quite likely that I may, at another time, detail one or two of the rather surprising adventures which we encountered on that remarkable journey. For what seemed to me good and sufficient reasons, our progress was made as surreptitiously as possible, it being my intention to keep the whole business quiet until we should report at Chalons which was where Tom had been stationed.

But, as you probably know, if you have seen any of those misleading news items, we were arrested at Langres. Here our pleasant hike through the hills, which I had counted upon to restore Tom's mental repose, was rudely brought to an end by the preposterous charge that I was assisting a deserter. The matter was straightened out in an hour, of course, and is too ridiculous to dwell upon. Even the army medical men,

who should have known better, smiled annoyingly when I stated, what was the plain truth, that it had simply been my intention to afford Tom a few days of the old woods life which he loved before presenting him to the authorities. And I have to thank his own irrational stubbornness and crying rebellion, that he was not taken from me altogether.

The incident is of no consequence, but I think you must already have discovered that Tom's memories of scouting, even when he was at his worst, formed the one link which bound his fitful and disordered mind to former days. Indeed, it was by this means that I began the task of nursing and diverting him. The merest mention of a camp fire or casual reference to a trail found always a ready response and I have learned myself to love Nature and all her beneficent influences and soothing voices, for the knowledge of how she dwelt constantly in the poor brain which could hold naught else.

It remains only to say that the task which I began has been triumphantly completed by a keen-eyed old man who presides over Temple Camp in the Catskills—Uncle Jeb, the boys call him. And if anyone in this war-torn world could bring

peace and poise to a distracted soul, Jeb Rushmore is that man.

And this brings me to my final task of gathering up the few loose threads of my tale, a thing which I could not do save for Tom's complete recovery. Straightway upon our return to Bridgeboro, Mr. Ellsworth, that indefatigable scoutmaster, took him up to Temple Camp, where he and Uncle Jeb are now busy getting the big camp ready for the influx of scouts which begins about June.

Roy, Mr. Ellsworth and I lost no time in discussing the proposition of publishing this whole story, and there seemed but one obstacle to our doing so. This was Margie Clayton, as sweet and patriotic a girl as ever lived, and what good end could be served by proclaiming to the world that the young fellow whom she had liked and trusted was a sneak and a traitor? Evidently she had cared for young Schmitt—there is no accounting for tastes, and girls are funny things. It was Roy, bully scout that he is, who put the clincher upon this discussion by reminding us of some rule or other that a scout must be kind and chivalrous.

And it was Miss Margie herself who took the

clincher off. How she learned the truth about Schmitt I have never discovered, but she made known in very unmistakable terms that the fate of the whole Schmitt family was nothing to her and that she was very sorry she had ever wasted a good photograph and a good sheet of notepaper on such a creature. As for the photograph, it was not exactly wasted for I returned it to her, and the last time I saw it was during one of my visits to Temple Camp where it hung in a birchbark frame in Tom's cabin. I did not ask him how it got there.

So, the way being clear, we went ahead with our publishing enterprise and I will conclude with one or two scraps of information which I have lately had from Tom. One is in answer to the question of how the cable of the balloon was broken. He thinks now that he must have cut this himself in savage desperation, fearing that Toby Schmitt would return after falling from the car. If, indeed, he did such a thing he must, of course, have been stark mad, and it is awful to think of him, the prey of such maniac fury, being carried, a lone prisoner in that little car, through clouds and darkness, who shall say how high, and

for how long, and finally cast like a shipwrecked mariner upon those lonely mountains.

The harrowing story of that awful night can only be imagined, and perhaps it is better so. No doubt, it is one of God's mercies that Tom should never recall all that happened in that insane combat among the clouds, and in the frightful journey which followed. He believes that he was in the air through another day, but I think that unlikely unless, indeed, the fugitive balloon was born hither and yon upon the changing winds before landing. All he knows is that he crawled out from under that tangled wreckage in the darkness of night.

One or two trifling details he remembers more closely. I asked him how Toby Schmitt happened to wear an American uniform and he said that evidently it was the custom of that unspeakable creature to wear not only the American, but the French and British uniforms, as occasion and the work in hand suggested. It was the sight of Schmitt in Uncle Sam's outfit which enraged Tom to the point of uncontrollable fury, but whether this was one of the causes or just a result of his nervous state I cannot say. He tells me that in Schmitt's room in the Grigou cottage there was

the uniform of an English lieutenant, and the jacket of an American Y. M. C. A. worker.

But enough of Schmitt; my pen rebels at the task of recalling his villainy. As for the tattered German coat which Tom wore, he supposes that he found it in the car. He says that his own coat was torn away by Schmitt in the struggle and no doubt this was so, since we know that the wretch also wrenched away the cord bearing his scout badge and identification disk.

There is only one more question and neither Tom nor myself could have any answer for it. It is whether the Germans really believed that they had discovered Slade, when in fact the body was that of their own man. Very likely they really thought it was Slade for, of course, Schmitt could not have been known to every subordinate in the German service, and doubtless he was disfigured beyond identification as the result of his tragic fall. Where his own mark of identification was, I have no guess, though perhaps, being a spy, he wore none.

It is a matter of rueful memory with me that I should have reverently laid a "tribute from our Bridgeboro scouts" upon the grave of that young scoundrel. But perhaps a better spirit of Christian

charity should incline me to cherish no such angry regrets and I will not begrudge him the few flowers which I left there as a token of the far-off town where he was born.

Indeed, I am not of a mood for unavailing bitterness for the cruel war is over and the springtime is come and the flowers are coming forth and the birds are singing in the trees as if to lure one's thoughts away from the horrid nightmare. And last Saturday Roy and I made the trip up to Temple Camp to see old Uncle Jeb and visit Tom in his retreat among those silent, lonely hills.

Not a soul was thereabout as we rowed across the lake to the camp shore, and the cabins and pavilion stood reflected in the black water and all the surrounding woods seemed permeated with a solemn stillness. It was at the day's end and the frogs were sending up their harsh croakings out of the marshy places—those discordant voices which accord so fittingly with the quiet and the dusk.

"When the frogs begin croaking," said Roy, "then you know that pretty soon the scouts will begin coming."

We found Uncle Jeb smoking his pipe under

the lean-to of the boarded-up cooking shack looking for all the world as if he were waiting for some rattling old stage-coach which he was to pilot across the scorching western plain. There was peace in his keen gray eyes and a refreshing whiff of the prairies in his brown, furrowed skin and drooping, gray moustache.

"Waiting for the boys to come, Uncle Jeb?" I asked, after the greeting.

"They'll be comin' purty quick naow, I reckin," he drawled.

"Find it lonesome here?"

" 'Tain't never lonesome," he said, "but I like to see the youngsters coming."

"I suppose you know that Roy and I together are going to write some stories about Temple Camp," I ventured, as a pleasantry.

He looked at Roy with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"And we're going to put you in, Uncle Jeb," said Roy.

"Thar's a youngster over yonder would fit into a story-book," Uncle Jeb drawled, "kind of a char-ac-ter, as you might say. Lives over thar through the woods whar you see the smoke goin' up."

He told us we would probably find Tom over that way for he had gone after milk. So we took our way along the woods path, which was filled with memories for Roy, until we came to a road with open country beyond, which, being private land, he had never crossed before. Perhaps a hundred yards or so distant stood an old white farmhouse with the familiar paraphernalia of barnyard and adjacent outbuildings, making, I thought, a pleasant scene of old-fashioned farm life.

As we followed the cowpath across the fields we became aware of two figures sitting on a rail fence, and I waved my hand to Tom, who answered with a cheery greeting to us both. It was good to see him looking so hale and ruddy.

But it was in a kind of trance that I saw him lower himself from the fence to come and meet us. For a second I stood gaping, then grasped Roy's arm in speechless amazement. For there before me, swinging his legs from the fence, was Archibald Archer!

Yes, it was none other than Archibald Archer as large as life, larger, in fact, with his freckled face lighted up so that he was just one enormous grin; Archibald Archer, home from the wars, and

once more enthroned among his favorite apple trees which ere long must pay him their luscious tribute. His feet were quite bare, he wore trousers of gaudy bed tick with suspenders brazenly conspicuous, and a straw hat as big as a parachute.

"Well—I'm flabbergasted!" I managed to gasp as I took his proffered hand; "I knew your home was near Temple Camp, but I didn't know *how* near."

"I'm mustered out," he informed me.

"I think I like you even better in your ancestral domains," I said, shaking his hand with right good will, "and I congratulate you that you are back in your orchards once more. I might have known that it would take more than a world war to kill *you*. Tell me, how is the souvenir business?"

"I got some mustarrd gas in a vinegarr jarr," he said. "Want to see it?"

"Thank you," I answered, "but I have had enough gas for one war. I think you are yourself quite enough of a souvenir for me. I shall not lose track of you again. Roy and I intend to put you where we can always have you handy." And I winked at my young literary partner.

"I got a piece of wirre from a wirreless, too," Archer persisted, as if his store was inexhaustible.

The doubtful nature of this last-mentioned memento gave me an uncomfortable feeling that I was being made fun of, so I retorted with severe sarcasm, "I do not care for that, but if you have a ring or two from the bell of Rheims Cathedral I might be willing to accept it."

"If you want to see the belles," he said, "come to the barrn dance on Saturrday night."

It was useless trying to down him.

"And how are all your friends on the other side?" I inquired, venturing upon a new tack. "Sir Douglas Haig and Papa Clemenceau? I hope they are quite well."

"Pretty smarrt," he answered, "but they couldn't come home with me on account of being busy."

"Too bad," said I; "and General Pershing and your old college chum, Marshal Foch—how are they?"

"Fine and dandy. They sent theirr kind regarrds to you."

"Their kind what?" said Tom in that sober way of his

"Regarrrrds!" repeated Archer.

"Once more," said Tom.

But for answer Archer toppled him off the fence, where he had reseated himself, to the amusement of Roy, who sat down on the ground, drew his knees up, clasped his hands about them, and laughed so that he shook.

"Humpty Dumpty Tomasso," he said.

And, do you know, I think that right there, with Roy Blakeley laughing his merry laugh and the famous, patent-applied-for scout smile spread all over his roguish face, is the place to end this rambling story. For in that laugh, as in the spring breeze, there is promise. And if you will but hold your hand to your ear, scout fashion, and fancy that you can hear his joyous uproar, you may take it as a reminder that the bloody war-path has, after all, brought us back to the solemn, friendly trees and the placid lake of the beloved camp once more, and that we are parting but to meet again in the scouts' own season, which is the good old summertime.

THE END.

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## By PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

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In a book given by a kindly old gentleman, Pee-wee Harris discovers what he believes to be a sinister looking memorandum, and he becomes convinced that the old gentleman is a spy. But the laugh is on Pee-wee, as usual, for the donor of the book turns out to be an author, and the suspicious memorandum is only a literary mark. The author, however, is so pleased with the boys' patriotism that he loans them his houseboat, in which they make the trip to their beloved Temple Camp, which every boy who has read the TOM SLADE BOOKS will be glad to see once more.

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Roy Blakeley and his patrol are found in this book once more happily established in camp. Roy and his friends incur the wrath of a land owner, but the doughty Pee-wee saves the situation and the wealthy landowner as well. The boys wake up one morning to find Black Lake flooded far over its banks, and the solving of this mystery furnishes some exciting reading.

### Roy Blakeley, Pathfinder

Roy and his comrades, having come to Temple Camp by water, resolve to make the journey home by foot. On the way they capture a leopard escaped from a circus, which brings about an acquaintance with the strange people who belong to the show. The boys are instrumental in solving a deep mystery, and finding one who has long been missing.

### Roy Blakeley's Camp on Wheels

This is the story of a wild and roaming career of a ramshackle old railroad car which has been given Roy and his companions for a troop meeting place. The boys fall asleep in the car. In the night, and by a singular error of the railroad people, the car is "taken up" by a freight train and is carried westward, so that when the boys awake they find themselves in a country altogether strange and new. The story tells of the many and exciting adventures in this car.

### Roy Blakeley's Silver Fox Patrol

In the car which Roy Blakeley and his friends have for a meeting place is discovered an old faded letter, dating from the Klondike gold days, and it appears to intimate the location of certain bags of gold, buried by a train robber. The quest for this treasure is made in an automobile and the strange adventures on this trip constitute the story.

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Roy and his friends go West to bring back some motor cars. They have some very amusing, also a few serious, adventures.

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Pee-wee goes to visit his uncle whose farm is located on a by-road. Pee-wee conceives the idea of starting a little shack along the road in which to sell refreshments and automobile accessories.

In accordance with his invariable good luck,—scarcely has he started this little shack than the bridge upon the highway burns down and the obscure country road becomes a thoroughway for automobiles. Pee-wee reaps a large profit from his business during the balance of the summer.

### Pee-wee Harris on the Trail

Pee-wee gets into the wrong automobile by mistake and is carried to the country where he has a great time and many adventures.

### Pee-wee Harris in Camp

The scene is set in the beloved and familiar Temple Camp. Here Pee-wee resigns from the Raven Patrol, intending to start a patrol of his own. He finds this more difficult than he had expected, but overcame all obstacles—as usual.

### Pee-wee Harris in Luck

Pee-wee goes with his mother to spend the summer on a farm, where he meets a girl who is bewailing her fate that there is no society at this obscure retreat. Pee-wee assures her he will fix everything for her—and proceeds to do so—with his usual success.

### Pee-wee Harris Adrift

A little spot of land up the river breaks away and floats down stream, with a laden apple tree growing upon it. Pee-wee takes possession of this island and the resulting adventures are decidedly entertaining.

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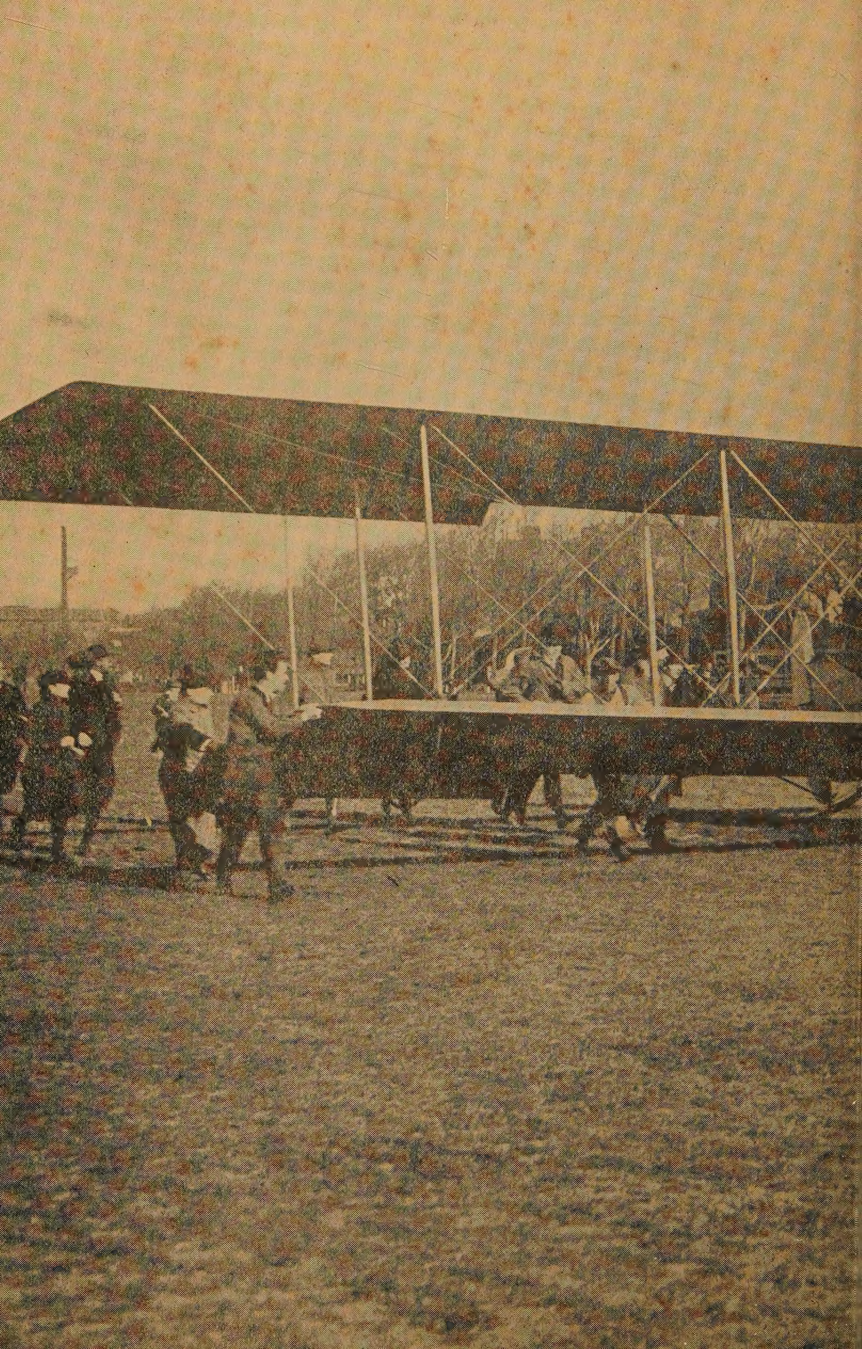
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